The Faces of Feminine Devotion in Ibsen's Theatre

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The illustration on the cover is a painting called *Tosca* by Rafal Olbinski.

www.tendreams.org/**olbinski**.htm

Contents

Argument

The theme of my thesis is the sacrifice of female characters in some of Ibsen's plays. The questions that I want to ask are the following: Why do these heroines sacrifice their lives and what does their sacrifice consist of and is there any connection between the character of these heroines and their sacrifice?

Certainly the heroines are different from each other in the same way as the structure of the plot of the plays is. Between the good and faithful Agnes from *Brand* and the evil Hedda Gabler from the homonymous play, there is a great variety of female characters who are Eve's descendants. Catching a glimpse, one can notice that there are more reliable and steadfast women who are typical of Ibsen's plays.

I am referring to Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* many times in my thesis in order to express the difference, resemblances, qualities and faults of Ibsen's women. *The Second Sex* is an interesting and challenging book about the situation of women, and therefore, I could apply some of these ideas to Henrik Ibsen's devoted female character. She analyses the situation of women and offers explanations to the behaviour of female characters.

"You seem to live in a society of bachelors; you don't see women"[1]
This is Lona Hessel's reply to Karsten Bernick in the final scene of *Pillars of Society* (1877). As one can notice, even if this retort is addressed to only one person, the protagonist of the play, the content of this assertion is aimed at the second person plural meaning the whole society. The reproach of cultivating the lack of interest and even the short-sightedness towards women is addressed to the society. This reproach contains a latent and yet an evidently polemical claiming which represents a constant in Henrik Ibsen's dramaturgy.

[1] Ibsen, Henrik. *The Wild Duck and Other Plays*. Trans. and ed. by Eva Le Galliene. New York: The Modern Library, 1961, p. 101

It is useless to say that on the scale of the evolution of civilisation, culture and universal literature, this point of view is not placed in an isolated or obscure corner. Even if on an economical, social plan and so much the more political, as Simone de Beauvoir emphasises for several times in her book *The Second Sex* (1949) woman had a privileged position in a mythical, literal and artistic plan. The examples are undoubtedly innumerable.

It is true that the mythical-religious representations assign a role which is not entirely favourable to some heroines. For example, Menelaus's Helen is the cause of the long and expensive Trojan War. Eve, being tempted by the demonic serpent is the first agent of the original sin that caused man's driving away from paradise. But these women are overshadowed by the exemplary manner of some effigies and opposite behaviours such as the wise, stern and warlike Minerva in the Greek – Latin mythology and Virgin Maria, immaculate embodiment of the mother figure and of the redemption of the original sin the Christian religion. At the same time, one must not forget that even the poetry of sensual and tempting femininity ca be found in the memorable and biblical expression of "The Song of the Songs" from *The Old Testament*.

It is not surprising that a lot of essential or abstract concepts are feminine in some languages which have a clear separation of the genders. Thus, the words land (terra in Latin), sea, mountain are feminine in French, Italian and Romanian, with the exception of mountain which is masculine in Romanian. Then, the words church, synagogue, native country and republic, together with victory, peace, fight, liberty, revolution, wisdom, harmony, reason and truth are feminine in French and Italian with the exception that truth is neutral in Romanian. Other examples could be the three Fates, the nine mythological muses, the soul (psyche in Greek or l'âme in French).

The names of some women are also legendarily, biblically and historically connected to a crucial event of the evolution of a certain people. Lucretia is Collatinus's wife who committed suicide after having been raped by Tarquinus Superbus's son. Her gesture led to the abolishment of royalty in Rome. Another example can be Judith, the biblical heroine who saved the fortified town and the tribe after killing Holopherne, Nabucodonosor's general while he was sleeping. Jeanne d'Arc is the well-known French

heroine who generated the annihilation of the English invasion and the regain of the national dignity.

The female characters whose names are symbolically connected to certain countries or regions are also eloquent and relevant. For example, Mignon, the young heroine of Goethe's bildungsroman, *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* (*Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* 1796) is the melancholic and romantic Italian woman who is nostalgically attracted to her native country. Other examples could be *Columba* (1840) and *Carmen* (1845) and *Sylvie*, (1894), the last one is Gérard de Nerval's silhouette of rustic reminiscence presented in the volume *Les Filles du Feu* (1854). Obviously, one could also meet such emblematical female characters in other literatures. For example, the love of the Russian landscape at the same time confronted with the heart-rending feeling of separation as if having a premonition about the brutal dispossession imposed to the landowners by the Bolshevik regime can also be found in Ranevskaia's unrest and agitation. The landowner Ranevskaia is the protagonist of *The Cherry Orchard*, Anton Pavlovici Chekhov's last play, endowed with testamentary accents. And if one mentions the Romanian literature, one could also find emblematical women for certain geographical regions. I will mention Vitoria Lipan from *The Hatchet* (the original title in Romanian, *Baltagul* 1930) by Mihail Sadoveanu. Vitoria Lipan is a shepherd's wife who is indestructibly connected to the customs and traditions of her universe.

Another female character who is as vigorous as Vitoria is Ludovica, the peasant from the centre of Transylvania with has a strong instinct of property and the heroine from the short stories *Old Man Urcan* (the original title in Romanian, *Urcan Bătrânul*, 1933) and *Old Man Urcan's Funeral* (*Înmormântarea lui Urcan Bătranul*, 1936) by Pavel Dan. As the creator of this last portrait is my grandfather, a prose writer who was appreciated despite of the fact that he lived only thirty years, I would like to quote from him and present a feminine portrait.

"Seated on a grass-covered anthill in the middle of the pasture, her black kerchief a little aslant exposing her greyish hair, her bony, sun-tanned, wrinkled face against the blue sky, the woman resembled a large prey bird about to take wing". [2]

[2] Dan, Pavel. *Stories*. Trans. and Preface by Fred Nădăban. Revised by Dr. Elain Kleiner. Cluj-Napoca: Limes Publishing House, 2002, p. 19

At the same time, when the public conscience intends to speak about Henrik Ibsen's plays, one is inclined to mention Nora's name, the main protagonist of *A Doll's House* (1879). Thus, in her philosophical and sociological synthesis, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir refers to the Norwegian playwright for three times in three different contexts and every time she mentions Nora, the emblematic heroine who became the symbol of female emancipation in the relation to man.

But it is also true that Nora represents a typical feminine behaviour in Ibsen's plays not for her final gesture at the end of the play but for her earlier behaviour which represents the opposite of a very independent attitude. The ending of *A Doll's House* was at that same time very shocking, as Ibsen's heroines were not some rebelled feminists, but on the contrary faithful embodiments of the traditional matrimonial relations.

My thesis deals with the latter category of women which represents a typical constant in Ibsen's plays. One could wonder whether this typological preference specific to the female characters is due to some biographical details such as the ethical attributes of the playwright's dear friends or relatives: Ibsen's mother or wife. As far as I am concerned, I think that the predilection, attribute of the playwright's nature, derives from the thematic and typological orientation specific to Ibsen's work which deals with a laudatory approach of the will, the energy and the capacity of action. Referring to these exemplary qualities of the heroines, Ibsen's early plays such as the dramatic poem *Brand* (1866) is a touching play. The reaction of the female characters is a moving attitude of acceptance, alienation and even submission. If they were reluctant, indifferent and even hostile in the subversive manner to the impressive beliefs or commitments of the men, women would form a second front inherently diminishing the importance of the main plot.

At the same time, one must not exclude a relation between the above-mentioned thematic preference and the historical moment of the playwright's affirmation. For instance, I do not consider accidental the coincidence of the publication of *The Pretenders*, a successful outcome of the romantic period in 1863 and the breaking out of the Prussian aggression the same year towards Denmark which ended up with Denmark's loss of the regions Sleswig and Holstein. The dramatic projection of some moments full

of vigour and dynamism from Norway's feudal past represents, in the given historical context, a political reaction of the Scandinavian solidarity that is as natural as the heroines' behaviour of *The Pretenders*. All the female characters of the play understand that they should submit to the men's goals and commitments especially to the two leaders engaged in a fierce fight for supremacy. And this typological natural aptitude, far from being an isolated case, worked its way up, remaining a constant value of Ibsen's plays.

There is still a contradiction of the behaviour of the female characters found not in a critical text about Ibsen's creation but in a philosophical approach that is the above-mentioned book, *The Second Sex* by Beauvoir. Her book, *The Second Sex* was extremely controversial and it was strongly criticised by the Catholic Church and even forbidden by the communist regime from Romania. Despite of this, *The Second Sex* was a success and it was translated in all the languages. One must specify that Simone de Beauvoir together with her friend, Jean-Paul Sartre, a well-known representative of the atheist existentialism doubled by the quality of an appreciated novelist opens a philosophical insurrection towards the condition of "the second sex".

Clearing up this problem from many points of view, biological, religious, psycho-analytical, historical and literal, Beauvoir, the great figure of the French feminism denounces woman's subordinate position which according to her is justified in complicity with legislators, priests, philosophers, writers and scholars. Her point of view can be found even in the introduction where she asserts that: "Now, woman has always been man's dependent, if not his slave; the two sexes have never shared the world in equality" (Beauvoir, 1953:19).

And even more vehement is this strange peevishness of Pierre de Boisdeffre's *Une Histoire vivante de la Litterature d'aujourd'hui* dealing with marriage included in the ample chapter "The Married Woman". These are some of the most eloquent formulations. The first one is about the principle of marriage which is described in the following way.

Marriage is obscene in principle in so far as it transforms into rights and duties those mutual relations which should be founded on a spontaneous urge; it gives an instrumental and therefore degrading character to the two bodies in dooming them to know each other in their general aspect *as* bodies, not as persons. (Beauvoir, 1953:432)

According to this principle, marriage "incites man to a capricious imperialism". (Beauvoir, 1953:450) Why? Because, as Beauvoir states:

the temptation to dominate is the most truly universal, the most irresistible one there is; to surrender the child to its mother, the wife to her husband, is to promote tyranny in the world. Very often it is not enough for the husband to be approved of and admired, for him to be a counsellor and guide; he issues commands, he plays the lord and master. (Beauvoir, 1953: 450)

But "this complex mixture of affection and resentment, hate, constraint, resignation, dullness, and hypocrisy called conjugal love is supposedly respected only by way of extenuation, whitewash". (Beauvoir, 1953:457) As one can notice, there are extremely a lot of negative characteristics included in this definition.

Thus, one could understand why all three references to Ibsen's plays deal with *A Doll's House*. Through her final gesture which does not define her totally, Nora is a very good example in Beauvoir's book, being as disappointed and rebelled as the French writer as far as marriage is concerned. The denouncement of man's "paternalistic oppression" is extremely sharp also in the context of the literary approaches. The French critic claims:

"If woman is not faithless, futile, cowardly, indolent, she loses her seductiveness. In Ibsen's *A Doll's House*, Helmer explains how strong, just, understanding, indulgent, a man feels when he pardons frail woman her childish faults". (Beauvoir, 1953:584)

With the same intentions, *The Second Sex* excels in quotations extracted from the journal of Sophie Tolstoy, the illustrious Russian novelist's confused wife. However, Beauvoir refuses to mention at least one of the sharp objections about the institution of marriage included in *The Kreutzer Sonata*, a novella written by Tolstoy, one of the most preoccupied writers about success of the institution of marriage.

Definitely, Beauvoir's feminist revolt does not exclude reasonable points of view towards the century-old servitudes of the woman. It is easily understood in the vassalage towards men that the existence is sometimes equivalent to minority, which reminds one of the treatment given to some minorities such as black or Jews. At the same time one could easily comprehend some components or demands of her step such as: the gain of

liberty, the impartiality of chances and of achievements both erotically and professionally.

But all these finalities do not correspond to the exclusive and negative accents based on direct aversion against the reasons of marriage. One can also notice that Beauvoir's philosophical commentary is usually placed in a certain absence of reference of time unjustified by historical evolution. The Countess Sophie Tolstoy's isolation and loneliness or Madame de Bovary' and Anna Karenina's conjugal dissatisfactions have certain contingencies which are rather pale to the woman's condition in the 20th century, especially because women have more economical, social and professional possibilities and opportunities than before.

As a matter of fact, even having this last attitude of planned emancipation and of freedom, woman does not succeed in being happy and satisfied with her life. In the final chapter *The Independent Woman*, included in the last section entitled *Towards Liberation*, Beauvoir objectively admits that it is difficult to find the happy relation between professional achievement and the equilibrium of an erotic rhythm based on free feminine initiative. The case of some unhappy real incidents in which certain women who practised free love, narrated in this section, reveals the risks full of unwanted surprises which could happen to Eve's daughters who opt for such experiences.

Ibsen's contribution concerning conjugal drama, violent separations and hypocritical dissimulations is representative for the 19th century literature. Despite of this, marriage sanctions a type of normal and desirable relation between man and woman. The material paternalistic subordination, the boredom and dissatisfaction which reminds one of Emma Bovary or women's position of vassalage towards pater familias are some real servitudes of wives, yet without being a rule. The sarcastic observations of the French thinker which also include the systematic annexations: wife-courtesan or wife-prostitute – prove to be sterile as they do not succeed in offering a valuable alternative.

I insisted previously on Beauvoir's work because methodologically speaking it is always useful to enlarge the analytical approach by confronting the literary fiction to the historical reality and to philosophical one. Catiline's step, the protagonist of Ibsen's first play is almost totally determined by the influence of the two opposite women: Aurelia and Furia. In his own way Henrik Ibsen acts in the same way as Homer who in *Iliad*

explains the Trojan War by the precedent of the kidnapping of Helen, Menelaus's wife by the Trojan Paris, although the causes of that famous event were probably others. And in the same way, as far as Catiline is concerned, the ancient historians such as Sallust and Appianos and especially *The Four Catiline Orations* by Cicero give information that Catiline's plot cannot be explained only by the saying "cherchez la femme" as the plot was due to a political impulse namely the repetitive failure of this politician to try to obtain the consulate through honest elections. As far as the feminine insertion is concerned, Appianos gives an interesting detail: the substantial sum paid on account by many matrons considered respectable to the conspirators with the intention of killing their husbands during the rebellion. Obviously, such an initiative might have inspired Cicero to say: "O! Tempora o! Mores!" which means Oh, Times! Oh, Morals!

In the same way the investigation of history could clear up the substratum of the messianic and rather abstract moral action of the priest Brand from the dramatic poem with the same name. The readers or the spectators wonder if the implacable moral pathos of Brand "All or Nothing" without giving up not even the sacrifice of his son or of his own, has or does not have a historical support. The answer is affirmative and could be connected with the identification of the addressee of the idealist Brand's fight against a nation of poor helots". Who could these poor Helotes be? Literary critics observed that Ibsen here aims at the refusal of both Norwegian and Swedish to come and help the Danish people against Prussian's aggression of Bismarck from 1864. The intervention was destined to the annexation of the Sleswig and Holstein.

Evidently the possible literary and historical relations above mentioned both in the case of historical such as *Catiline* and in that of poem that was expressionist and romantic are extremely instructive. Under these circumstances, the literary analytical or synthetic commentary could be completed in a useful way for the ontological references to the reality of the epochs and the approached personalities.

Planning to analyse the behaviours of faithful and devoted women, I accept the fact that people may not be so much interested in the character of these heroines. Both in life and in literature or theatre, the public curiosity is preferentially oriented to the problematic characters or even to the negative ones which have an over plus of energy.

Who remembers today Antoninus Pius whose name was sometimes confused with Antonius, the Roman emperor who sold his goods by auction in order to give the money to the state, a generosity manifested also to his son-in-law, Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher Caesar? On the other hand, posterity knows much more about the noxious Nero and Caligula who represent the embodiment of caprice, abuse and criminal impulses. From the same reasons, speaking about literature, problematical characters whose prototype is Shakespeare's Hamlet together with the negative ones seem to be more interesting than the one who have positive qualities. Therefore, the vindictive, careerist and unscrupulous, Rebecca Sharp from *Vanity Fair* is easily to be remembered for the readers and represents a considerably more striking silhouette than her generous, hospitable, mild and inoffensive friend, Amelia Sedley. In the same way, one could notice that the restless Karamazov brothers, Alyosa's elder brother and the gloomy Raskolnikov, the protagonist from *Crime and Punishment* are more relevant to the memory of posterity than the angelic Prince Myshkin, the protagonist of *The Idiot*, another novel by Dostoevsky. Under the same auspices, Ibsen's Nora, a problematic heroine became a very convenient presence in Beauvoir's book as she mentions *A Doll's House* three times in her philosophical dissertation. Nora is a problematic female character as she changes her common inoffensive ingenuity and adapts an explosive turning point concerning the approach of marriage and family. But I will not analyse Nora because of her "problematic" behaviour at the end of the play, but because of her anterior attitude as an extremely devoted wife.

As a matter of fact Nora is not the only heroine built on a discontinuous and antonymic evolution. Metamorphoses, more or less of the same kind could be seen in Rebecca from *Rosmersholm* (1886), Ellida and Bolette from *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) and Betty Bernick, Consul's Karsten Bernick from *Pillars of Society* (1877). Actually, even from ideal point of view, Ibsen's theatre manifests the attraction for a dialectics of the contraries. For example, the end of *Pillars of Society*, leads to the aphoristic conclusion uttered by Miss Hessel that "Truth and the Spirit of Freedom – they're the *real* Pillars of Society! (Ibsen, 1961:102) On the contrary, the morals of *The Wild Duck* (1884) found in the hasty advice and paid with a young girl's life, is the

request of prudence in telling the painful truth, so the obligation of a tact, equivalent with the appearance of a censorship in certain situations.

On the other hand, Ibsen's theatre is abundantly populated with consistent women of character, who know how to respect their commitments with an unshaken fidelity, an emblematic feature of Ibsen's female characters. Naturally, I will analyse this type of women in my dissertation and later I will also examine problematic heroines whose behaviours include unexpected conversions or at least the reveal of unsuspected interior resources. Joan Templeton divides women into two main categories: "the self-reliant, aggressive and often destructive 'Valkyrie', on the one hand, and her devoted, self-sacrificing opposite". [3] Methodologically, my thesis is a synthetic essay of typological application dedicated to an obvious preference that is the devoted heroines. The first part of my thesis entitled *Devoted Heroines Endowed with an Unflinching Attachment and Fidelity* will deal with the heroines who dedicated their life entirely to their husbands, sons, lovers or relatives. I will analyse the devoted heroines from Ibsen's early, middle and late plays such as: Aurelia from *Catiline*, Agnes from *Brand*, Betty Bernick and Marta Bernick from *Pillars of Society*, Helene Alving from *Ghosts*, Aunt Julle and Thea Elvsted from *Hedda Gabler*, Aline Solness from *The Master Builder* and Ella Rentheim from *John Gabriel Borkman*.

In my opinion Ibsen has a third type of women who are not entirely good, affectionate and protective and who are not entirely dangerous, evil and destructive. This type of category consists of problematic heroines capable of affection who are endowed with self-sacrifice but being confronted with a disappointing reality, they begin to take up a less trenchant attitude. In the second part of my thesis entitled *Problematic Heroines with a Surprising Evolution* I will deal with Nora and Christine Linden from *A Doll's House*, Rebecca from *Rosmersholm,* Ellida and Bolette from *The Lady from the Sea* as very illustrative examples for this category. The inclusion of these female characters above-mentioned may seem paradoxical and unjustified because these four women are first remembered for their gestures and attitudes which contradict the idea of devotion. For example, one could ask this question: Why is Nora from *A Doll's House*, a wife who

[3] Templeton, Joan. *Ibsen's Women*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1999, p. 24

deserts not only her husband but also her three children included in my thesis? Those who may ask this rhetorical question forget that before Nora slammed the door to her husband, she had assumed a considerable material and moral risk in order to save her husband's life thus proving the most vigorous resources of conjugal devotion. But as a reward for her act of abnegation, Nora was called "miserable creature", "a hypocrite, a liar" and even "a criminal"[4] I will analyse the behaviour of these female characters in contrast to the devoted women in a special chapter dedicated to them.

As far as Rebecca from *Rosmersholm* is concerned, her behaviour opposed to the idea of devotion is the one she committed against Beate, Rosmer's wife. But this time the ending of the play includes Rebecca through her gesture of supreme sacrifice in the category of the representatives of devotion in Ibsen's theatre.

In the same way due to the same option from the ending of the play, the restless Ellida, Dr. Wangel's wife from *The Lady from the Sea*, could be included in the same category of the representatives of fidelity even partially.

The feminine physiognomy above-mentioned bring a variety to a character series rather linear and monotonous.

[4] Ibsen, Henrik. *Four Plays: A Doll's House, The Wild Duck, Ghosts and The Master Builder.* Edited by William Archer. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1954, p. 96

I Devoted Heroines Endowed with an Unflinching Attachment and Fidelity

1. The Unanimity of the Devoted Behaviour: The Heroines of ***The Pretenders***

The attitude of the female characters from *The Pretenders* (1864) is extremely interesting and it was inspired by an episode of the rivalry to the crown the 13th century Norway, a country that was called by Earl Skule "the ground of right"[5]. As Helge Rønning claims in his book *Den umulige friheten* (2006), Ibsen's most important source of inspiration was P.A. Munch's Norway's History. [6] The main roles, in an overwhelming proportion belong to the two pretenders to the Norwegian royal crown: Earl Skule who unleashes a daring and bloody rebellion against his rival, king Haakon, the real king. Ibsen attributes both the political-military actions and the dilemmas to these rivals together with some hamletian oscillations or one could say Dostoevskyan remorse, if the play did not outdistance in time the great novels of the Russian writer starting with *Crime and Punishment* (1866).

Ane Hoel asserts that women in this play are very important despite of the fact that they "are not given much space" [7], only a few speeches and that they are endowed with "the power of healing". (Hoel, 2000:69)

Contrasting with the anxieties and hesitations of the heroes, the heroines have an obvious stability in their attitude. Ibsen entrusts the heroines the task of moral support to the restless men. For example, the attitude is **Inga**, Haakon's mother is extremely telling.

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[5] Ibsen, Henrik, *The Pretenders. Pillars of Society. Rosmersholm*. London: J. M. Dent, 1913, p. 10
[6] Rønning, Helge. *Den umulige friheten*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 2006, p. 119
[7] Hoel, Ane. "The Role of Women in Henrik Ibsen's The Pretenders". *Ibsen Studies*. Vol. I. No. 1. Oslo: Centre for Ibsen Studies. 2000, p. 68

At the beginning of the play, Inga undergoes the painful test of the glowing iron in order to prove that her son is the legitimate heir of the Norwegian throne. This was a real event that historically took place in 1218. There is an unusual episode almost unbelievable in the third act of *The Pretenders*, Ibsen's first critical and popular success. Inga's acceptance without any protest of the undeserved exile imposed by her son, considering herself not the king's mother, but a simple woman from Varteig is extremely impressive. Making a trip to Oslo in order to hand in a letter to Bishop Nicholas, Inga does not dare to visit Haakon contenting herself with hiding herself under the eaves where he was passing by or praying in Hallvard's church for her brilliant son. This episode offers the proof of the heroic dimension shown by this faithful and devoted mother. With the same abnegation she answers to marshal Dagfinn when he considers her a "poor sorely-tried woman". (Ibsen, 1913: 48) Inga says: "It is no sore trial to have so great a son" (Ibsen, 1913:48)

One must not forget the fact that she had passed the terrible "ordeal of the Iron on behalf of Haakon, heir to the crown"! (Ibsen, 1913:3)

However, in the second scene of third act, the last time Inga appears in the play, her son Haakon, the King of Norway realises his mistake of sending his mother away and apologises to them for having treated them coldly. He says: "We shall never separate again". (..) "Margrete – mother, I have sinned greatly; I have looked up my heart against you two who are so rich in affection". (Ibsen, 1913: 71)

Earl Skule's sister, **Sigrid** is also attached to Haakon's cause and she asks the king to make her the abbess of Rejn nunnery (being less modest than her mother) after her bridegroom had been murdered the night of wedding day. Sigrid claims:

Since the night of blood in Nidaros – my wedding night – when the Baglers came and slew my husband and many hundred others with him, while every corner of the town was in flames – since then it seemed to me as though the blood and fire had blinded me and had shut out the world around me from my sight. But it gave me the power to catch glimpses of what no other eyes can see; and one thing I see now – a time of mighty terror in store for this land. (Ibsen, 1913: 40)

Endowed with the gift of prophecy, Sigrid foresees the final victory to Haakon. Sigrid was also called "the Cassandra of the play" by both Templeton and by Atle Kittang"[8]. (Templeton, 1999: 75)

Hoel sees a difference between Sigrid and Ragnhild, her sister-in-law concerning the way they regard power. Thus, Sigrid thinks that power leads to "human destruction" (Hoel, 2000:74), while Ragnhild praises her husband, Earl Skule and believes he must have power. She says: "Blessed Saint Olaf, give him all the power in the land"!

Sigrid: (wildly). "No, none! – none! Otherwise he cannot be saved!"

Ragnhild: "He *must* have power. Everything that is good in him will grow and bear fruit, if he has that"- (Ibsen, 1913: 12 - 13)

With the same devotion, **Margrete** honours her role as wife and mother when she has to choose between this quality and that of the daughter of Earl Skule, the opponent and rival of her husband. Margrete's marriage is a happy one based on mutual love and respect. From the very beginning of the play, King Haakon puts all his trust in his wife and asks her to stay be his side and be a good advisor for him. He thinks that:

"Every man can profit from a woman's advice, and from to-day I have no one but you. I was obliged to send my mother away"- (Ibsen, 1913: 18)

She is at the same a very devoted mother to her "lovely son" who is "a thousand times dearer to me than all the kingdom – and so is he to Haakon too. I scarcely can believe in my happiness". (Ibsen, 1913: 61)

Torn by her divided emotion as wife of King Haakon and daughter of Duke Skule, Margrete finally comforts her mother and accepts her father's death knowing that her place is with her husband.

One can notice that the women who are closely connected to the restless and oscillating Earl Skule behave in the same manner. **Ingebjørg**, Skule's former mistress gives the most eloquent example. She admits that she has kept her affection for the one she loved sinfully maintaining her youth as Skule notices in the north icy solitude. Skule observes "But your voice is as fresh and sweet and young as it was in those days". (…)

[8] Kittang, Atle. "The Pretenders – Historical Vision or Psychological Tragedy. *Ibsenårbok*. Universitetsforlaget, 1975-76, p. 36

"And all this time, you, Ingebjørg, warn-hearted, faithful woman, have remained up there in the north in icy solitude, garnering and treasuring your memories". (Ibsen, 1913: 87)

Skule's betrayal of Ingebjørg could be compared to Peer Gynt's betrayal of Solveig and to Karsten Bernick's betrayal of Lona Hessel or to John Gabriel Borkman's betrayal of Ella Rentheim. But there is a difference in *The Pretenders* namely that Ingebjørg remained pregnant and she married somebody else, Andres Skjaldarband. Nevertheless, the problem of betrayal in love is a permanent motive in Ibsen's plays.

Ingebjørg's appearance in the forth act represents the unexpected, the perpetum mobile in Ibsen's play which at the same time complicated the action.

As if having a presentiment about Skule's hesitations and agitation that he did not have a son, Ingebjørg offers him the remedy, namely Peter, his illegitimate son whom Andres Skjaldarband, her husband was informed of. That is why her noble husband left and "died on the way from Jerusalem". (Ibsen, 1913:88) As Ingebjørg explains, "it was my guilt he took upon his strong, dear shoulders; it was that he went to wash away in the waters of Jordan; it was that he bled for". (Ibsen, 1913: 88) She confesses to Skule that their son, Peter, a priest has been the light and comfort of her life for twenty years and that it was Bishop Nicholas's wish to give Peter to Skule as penance for all her sin. Before Ingebjørg leaves, she assures Skule of her son's innocence and kindness and asks him to take good care of Peter's soul. She says: "He is as pure as a lamb of God, as now I give him into your hands. The road that leads to the throne is full of dangers; see to it that his soul takes no harm"! (Ibsen, 1913: 89) Later on, Ingebjørg stresses the significance of maintaining Peter's innocence that is more important than his life. She warns Skule: "If you ever come to know that his soul has taken harm, rather let him die that moment"! (Ibsen, 1913: 89)

And Skule's satisfaction is even stronger as his young son is entirely devoted to him and at the same time is capable of committing a blasphemy and of murdering Haakon's son. Less reserved than his father, Peter makes his plans having quite a fanatical determination: Peter: "I have dragged out Saint Olaf's shrine; I am not afraid to drag out Haakon's child"! (Ibsen, 1913: 119)

Finally the last woman who proves to have the same Ibsenian faith in her husband whom she owes respect is **Ragnhild**, Skule's wife. The same way as Inga,

Haakon's mother, Ragnhild reveals her strong devotion to her beloved husband, despite of his ill-luck of becoming the king of Norway. Ragnhild's strong devotion and humiliation reminds the reader of Inga, Haakon's mother. She tells her husband:

Ragnhild: "You have sinned against me? Oh, Skule, never say that. Do you think I would ever have dared accuse you? I have always been too poor a thing for you, my husband; there can be no blame to you for anything that you have done". (Ibsen, 1913: 117 – 118)

And she is not satisfied with this declarative form of love, but she also thinks about saving and following her husband anywhere, as she knows he is in danger. Thus, she urges Skule: "Into the church, Skule! For God's sake, do not let the bloodthirsty men come near you"! (Ibsen, 1913: 118) (…) "Fly far from this country, Skule! I will follow you when and where you will". (Ibsen, 1913: 121)

Templeton emphasises the significance of woman in *The Pretenders* and asserts that they "stand for permanence and fidelity against shifting political sands". (Templeton, 1999: 79) At the same time, she also claims that these heroines "constitute a feminine counter-world of love and stability in opposition to the masculine sphere of violence and struggle". (Templeton, 1999: 79)

Hoel also stresses the importance and the qualities of these women whose deeds are "founded on love, faithfulness and insight". (Hoel, 2000:71)

Being entirely subordinate to men involved in a strong political and historical antagonism, the women from *The Pretenders* distinguish themselves through their common devotion doubled by an indisputable self-sacrifice. In spite of this exemplary and stable faith, one must not exclude an undesirable effect, which takes away their capacity to offer new ways to the development of the conflict and plot. Thus, these heroines represent the first sketches of the future, irreproachable wives and daughters from Ibsen's late plays. It is not excluded that Ibsen might have been realistic presenting his heroines in this manner. In other words, one cannot exclude the fact that this laudatory constancy may have not only a historical relevance but also an ethnical one specific to the moral attributes of the Norwegian people.

2. The Recurrent Triangle in ***Catiline*** and in Other Plays by Ibsen
A Man Standing between a Good and a Fatal Woman

This famous theme of a man standing between two opposite types of women can be first seen in Ibsen's first play *Catiline* (1850). *Catiline: A Drama in Three Acts* is Ibsen's first historical drama about a noble man and rebel, inspired by Sallust and Cicero's writings about Catiline.

According to Templeton, the two contrasting women are described by Francis Bull as "the sexually exciting, dangerous, and demanding Furia" and "the gentle, pale, and weak, Aurelia". (Templeton, 1999: 23)

On the one hand, Aurelia is Catiline's loving and caring wife who thinks that "to comfort is the role of every wife"[9] She is the kind and tender wife who suggests that they should go to their villa in the country-side and live happily and enjoy the peace and harmony of the rural area. She offers Catiline the promise of peace and harmony, an alternative to his restless life. The mild, bright and sweet Aurelia was characterised by Asbjørn Aarseth as "the darling". As Asbjørn Aarseth asserts "the darling may be described as someone – generally a woman – who is capable of unlimited compassion and selfless love, a character who in her actions reveal a strong sense of social commitment". [10]

At the end in Act III, Aurelia, the devoted and faithful wife of Catiline, capable of strong love begs her husband not to leave her. She implores him:

"By all the love I bear you Catiline, - I beg you, I adjure, - let us not part!" (Ibsen, 1921: 81)

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[9] Ibsen, Henrik. *Early Plays: Catiline, The Warrior's Barrow, Olaf Liljekrans*. Trans. by Anders Orbeck. New York: The American-Scandinavian Foundation, 1921, p. 25

[10] Aarseth, Asbjørn. "The Darling and the Demon: Female Characters in Ibsen's Drama", *Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. International Ibsen Seminar and Workshop. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997. p.15

At the same time, she realises that her rival, Furia interfered in the relationship between her and Catiline and influenced and lured him to death. She accuses Furia saying:

> Aurelia: "You the serpent are, who poisoned all my joy in life,
> Steeled his heart against my kindness through your deadly strife." …….
> "Like a threat I see you stand between my love and me.
> With my husband at my side I cherish in my breast
> Longings for a tranquil life, a home of peace and rest." (Ibsen, 1921: 82)

Despite of the fact that Catiline stabs her with his dagger, the angelic and self-sacrificing Aurelia has the power not only to forgive her husband but also to stand by him and encourage him with her tender generosity, calm and optimism. In the same manner as Solveig from *Peer Gynt* (1867), Aurelia represents the good force, the force of peaceful life and love. Jon Nygaard claims that "in the most interesting plays of Ibsen the leading part or the real heroine is the womanly woman, just apparently playing a minor character". [11] This is the case of Solveig from *Peer Gynt*, Aurelia from *Catiline* and Dagny from *The Vikings at Helgeland.*

In her last sentences before her death, Aurelia shows her affection and love for her husband and says:

(*from the tent, pale and faltering, her bosom body*) – no, towards the right! Oh, towards Elysium!" (*Kneels before him*). No, I live that I may still your agonizing cry, - Live that I may lean my bosom on your breast and die. (…) See, the storm-clouds vanish; faintly gleams the morning star. (Ibsen, 1921:93)

The opposite of the gentle Aurelia, Catiline's guardian angel is the aggressive, passionate and demonic character, Furia, "the demon of the play". (Aarseth, 1997:15) Aarseth gives a very concise and significant definition of the demon. Thus, according to him, "the demon on the other hand, likewise a woman, is a character whose capacity for passion – erotic, emotional and intellectual – is fully equal to if not surpassing that of the darling, but whose projects and ambitious are of such a selfish and destructive kind that they have to be pursued along secret lines". (Aarseth, 1997: 15) Furia is a far more interesting character than Aurelia who represents a force of life closely related to death.

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[11] Nygaard, Jon. "The Role of Women in Ibsen's Plays". *Proceedings: Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. International Ibsen Seminar and Workshop. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997, p. 45

In the first act of the play, she makes Catiline swear that he would be the enemy of the man who raped Furia's sister, Sylvia, a young girl who was supposed to be a vestal but who later drowned in the Tiber River.

But the man who ravished and disgraced Sylvia was actually Catiline himself. Catiline, who is divided between these two opposing women, first wants to leave Rome together with his wife, go to Gaul and live in quiet solitude. But it is the manipulating and vengeful Furia who convinces Catiline to stay in Rome and die as a hero. Catiline's infatuation with Furia is a threat to his life. Filled with a desire for revenge, Furia tempts and lures Catiline to destruction and says that the future generations will recall his fate. Furia can be regarded as a fatal woman and at the same time she is Catiline's shadow, the image of his soul, a kind of ghost who belongs to the realm of darkness, the kingdom of death and who finally stabs Catiline deep in his heart at his request in the last scene of the third act. But in reality Catiline died in the battle between his rebel troops and the senatorial ones in January 62 b. Kr. in Pistoria from Etruria near Prato. According to Templeton, "the fatal woman of Ibsen's first play is the hero's genius and alter-ego". (Templeton, 1999: 25) She asserts that Furia is "the powerful woman, the hero's conscience and the gentle woman the representative of moral cowardice". (Templeton, 1999: 28) Besides this moral cowardice, I could also say that Aurelia is the representative of strong love, sincerity, generosity and self-sacrifice.

One can also notice the same triangle of a man divided between two women in other plays by Ibsen such as *The Feast at Solhaug* (1856) and *The Vikings at Helgeland* (1858). I will only mention these triangles without analysing these plays. Thus, in *The Feast at Solhaug*, Gudmund Alfson falls in love with the younger sister, **Signe,** the innocent and simple girl while Margit, Signe's sister is still in love with Gudmund, her former lover. *The Vikings at Helgeland*, Ibsen's play of his engagement to Suzannah Thoresen, his wife is a historical play which presents Sigurd standing between his wife, **Dagny**, (the "new day", Nygaard, 1997: 45) a passive and timid woman who like Aurelia asks him to abandon his calling of becoming the king of Norway and Hjørdis, the strong, brave, intelligent and aggressive woman whom he deserted.

3. A Feminine Erotic and Exalted Devotion – Agnes from ***Brand***

This dramatic romantic poem emphasises the capacity of a man endowed with moral qualities such as decision, courage and perseverance to attract and even to subjugate the soul of a woman. The one who possesses these exceptional qualities is the priest Brand, the prophet of a rather vague religion meant to reform totally the debased people supposed to be coward and irresolute. Making a self-portrait, Brand sums up his call as the following:

Brand: "I've not come here to preach for any sect or church.
Not as a Christian, even; as my own man,
I tell you this: I know the nature of the flaw
that has so thinned and drained the spirit of our land". [12]

Brand also says that his duty is to change people into new men.

Brand: "I shall heal this disease that withers heart and brain,
and make you all new men!"(Ibsen, 1981: 16)

Being advised by Gerd, a fifteen-year-old savage girl to build an ice church, this restless priest and reformer, Brand agrees to do that. But besides this, this gloomy character, representative of the austere northern landscape preaches a religion equivalent with the supreme risk and sacrifice summed up as: All or Nothing. Performing such a spectacular deed, he succeeds in captivating, fascinating, subjugating and converting his future wife, **Agnes**. I use the word convert because Agnes was not a beginner in life, but Einar's fiancée, Brand's childhood friend. The crucial episode consists in the priest's decision to cross the fjord in a small boat in extreme stormy weather in order to redeem a dying man guilty of murdering his child. As nobody dared to come with Brand in the boat, Agnes decides to join the priest and leave Einar. This act of courage makes Agnes much stronger and braver than her fiancé, the painter Einar who proves to be rather coward as he does not dare to risk his life. Her gesture represents a relative foreshadowing of Nora

[12] Ibsen, Henrik. *Brand*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1981, p. 14

who *A Doll's House* who later leaves Helmer at the end of the play. Her gesture to join Brand and help the dying man and at the same time her sacrifice can be regarded as Agnes's first but not last sacrifice. At the end of the second act, Ibsen emphasises this strong opposition between Brand and Einar extremely poetically. Thus, as Einar says Agnes must "choose between storm and calm. Choose between 'go' and 'stay'. Choose between joy and grief. Choose between night and day. Choose between death and life". (Ibsen, 1981: 57-58)

In the name of an absolute strictness, the priest refuses to give his mother "the last rites" (Ibsen, 1981: 49) namely, to stay with her until she dies and redeem her soul in exchange of making him her only heir. Although Agnes, the doctor, the mayor of that village and other men try to convince Brand to redeem his dying mother, they cannot change the stubborn priest who claims "**All or Nothing**. That is my demand. The task is very great. And the risk, also, is very great. There'll be no mercy shown. There's no provision made for weakness or dread". (Ibsen, 57) In the third act Brand justifies his stubbornness and refusal to redeem his mother by saying that "I don't make different laws, one for my own hearth, the other for strangers. My mother knows that 'All or Nothing is absolute". (Ibsen, 1981: 69)

Agnes will also have to make a very difficult choice to sacrifice her child, Alf and stay with Brand in that cold house although they were advised by a doctor to move to a milder environment. Agnes is portrayed as a subordinated woman who can accept her husband's decisions even if they are good or bad. She tells her husband modestly: "Ask what you dare to ask, I am your wife. My task is simply to obey". (Ibsen, 1981: 94)

Helje Kringlebotn Sødal claims that Agnes "is forced to make the impossible choice" [13] when she has to choose between her duty as a mother and her duty as a wife.

In the forth act, Ibsen evokes with human warmth the suffering of the two parents who watch the grave of their dead son during Christmas Eve, the celebration of childhood excellently. Noticing that Agnes begins to estrange herself from him and take refuge in memories of Alf, Brand imposes another type of cruelty to her, this time an excessive one. Thus, Brand asks his wife to give not only some of Alf's garments but all of Alf's

[13] Sødal, Helje Kringlebotn. "Beautiful Butterfly, Agnes Mine? A New Interpretation of Agnes in Henrik Ibsen's Brand". *Ibsen Studies*. Vol. 1 no. 2. Oslo: Centre for Ibsen Studies, 2001, p. 88

clothes to a gipsy woman including Alf's small cap, a precious thing for Agnes. This sacrifice is strongly connected to Brand's saying 'All or Nothing'.

It is instructive to observe that even if she remarks the cruelty of Brand's gestures and the hardness of his love, Agnes does not revolt herself not complain about the harsh and merciless demands she has to obey. Agnes promises to be Brand's "dedicated wife" (Ibsen, 1981: 102) who does not dare to say a word against him, protest or impose conditions on him when he tells her

Brand: "Agnes, you were called by God to be my wife,

And I dare to demand your 'all', your whole life". (Ibsen, 1981: 122)

The moment Agnes gives the last remain of Alf to the gipsy woman without any regret, she becomes all of a sudden happy. This moment taking place before her death could be seen as a moment of insanity.

"Gradually the expression on her face is transformed into pure radiant joy. **Brand** returns; she goes exultantly to meet him, throws her arms around his neck and cries out:

Agnes: "O Brand, O Brand, at last I'm free

Of everything that drew me out to the dust"! (Ibsen, 1981: 130 – 131)

As Sødal states, Agnes is "a far more complex character" than Solveig from *Peer Gynt*. Thus, "she shows independence and strength unlike most of her sister characters in romantic literature" and at the same time she is "related to many strong women in Ibsen's late plays". (Sødal, 2001:79 - 80) Agnes has been praised for her qualities and for her sacrifice by critics. Daniel Haakonsen regards Agnes as "the only character in play that *rises towards the divine* while Sigurd Høst asserts that "Ibsen has never created a lovelier character than Agnes". (Sødal, 2001: 80)

According to Sødal, Agnes is a heroine who changes from the "delicate butterfly" dancing with Einar to a "strong and courageous woman" (Sødal, 2001: 82) who is ready to sacrifice everything for her husband. Therefore, I could say that Agnes is a round character who is complex and undergoes development under the influence of her husband. I could also say that Agnes is the ideal wife of the obstinate and upright priest who represents the link between the earth and the ideal heaven. Attached to the real life, the natural senses of humanity she is constantly striving to adapt herself to the harsh expectations of her husband who is obsessed with idealism.

Agnes's strong attachment of hypnotic nature seems to go beyond everything despite of the sufferings, difficulties and inconveniences she encounters. Although she does not survive the great hardships, Agnes will continue to speak pathetically about her great love for Brand. Before she dies she tells him:

I give you thanks for all I have,
And for your own dear love
to me, poor, weary, stumbling one.
My eyes are heavy and the mist
gathers, and I must rest. (Ibsen, 1981:133)

The play is not only a play about call and vocation but it is also a play about the tragedy of love. Brand and Agnes's mutual love is a creative relationship in which they are inspiring each other.

As Sødal asserts, Agnes's name is associated with the Latin word agnus meaning lamb (Sødal, 2001: 83) and at the same time she is a heroine endowed with love, compassion, generosity and submission. Only after her death, Brand realises how precious was Agnes to him and how he sacrificed his son and her, his ideal wife for his calling. He claims:

Oh Agnes if you hadn't died,
Things would be different. They would!
Heaven and home were near your heart.
You were the laurel of true life. (Ibsen, 1981: 139)

Sødal gives a very good explanation for Agnes's death and regards her as a victim deceived both by her husband and by her own values where duty was the most significant thing.

This devoted Agnes represents a memorable embodiment of the Ibsenian spirit of self-sacrifice more than any other female character. Sødal praises Agnes for her qualities but at the same time he notices her weaknesses and faults. Sødal asserts that although Agnes is a "mild, loving, pious and compassionate" (Sødal, 2001: 90-91) heroine who is the "representative of love and compassion in the play", (Sødal, 2001: 80) she is still passive as she allows Brand to sacrifice their son on the altar of duty.

Aarseth states that in this play one can also see the two opposing women namely the darling represented by Agnes and the demon identified with Gerd, the fifteen-year-old savage and mad girl who speaks about an Ice Church in the mountains and dies with Brand caught in the avalanche at the end of the play. (Aarseth, 1997: 17) At the same time Templeton establishes another type of antithesis between Agnes and Gerd. Thus, according to Templeton, Agnes is identified with "the voice of the valley", while Gerd with "the heights". (Templeton, 1999: 81)

From the angle of the dramatic construction, it is interesting to analyse the final solution of the play. Ibsen takes over Shakespeare's suggestion of the insertion of supernatural being. But Ibsen does not assign the role of startling moral support to the ghost as Shakespeare gives to Hamlet's father but that of a character meant to mediate a conclusion for the protagonist. It is about the apparition that brings Agnes post mortem back to Brand. Agnes reminds Brand reproaching him that he forced the impossible too much and followed the way of the fanatical exaggeration. Agnes's ghost can also be regarded as a temptation in the wilderness, as Jesus was tempted by the devil during the forty days he spent in the desert. She threatens him saying that: "The seraph with the sword of flame, remember Brand? And Adam's doom, remember? And the dread abyss before the gate? You shall not pass into your self-willed paradise"! (Ibsen, 1981: 178)

Agnes disappears as in a thunder-clap followed by a sharp and penetrating cry and demands Brand to die.

Agnes: "Die, Brand, die!

All life disowns your destiny"! (Ibsen, 1981: 178)

Gerd, Brand's only companion in the mountains at the end of the play seems to have the same aspect of a ghost when she appears in the final scene. Foreshadowing the characters of 20th century expressionist theatre, Gerd symbolically embodies the irreducible absolutism of Brand's behaviour. Carrying a riffle stolen from a huntsman, Gerd, who was considered insane by the countrymen, outlines a mythic portrait to her interlocutor, Brand. Thus, in Brand Gerd sees a great man, a Saviour killed on the Cross, and consequently another Jesus. This time the character who becomes more human is Brand himself. Now he wants to feel "the sunshine and the thaw! And life shall be rejoining now, now I have to kneel". (Ibsen, 1981: 181) Amazed by the unseen tears of her hero,

Gerd aims at the mountain and the bullet unleashed the avalanche that would bring both her and Brand's death. The ending is obviously hyperbolical and worth of the protagonist's scope. Brand's death could be regarded as a punishment for his lack of love and for the way be treated his mother, son and wife.

In *Brand* Ibsen presents the heroic version of the feminine devotion capable to reach the highest points and to make a woman's love sublime. The romantic seal of this vision is extremely evident.

4. An endless love: Solveig from ***Peer Gynt***

Solveig is a romantic heroine who spends all her life waiting for Peer Gynt, the man who deserted her. In the first act, Solveig appears "holding hands with little Helga"[14], her younger sister, together with her parents at Ingrid's wedding in Hægstad. Peer asks Solveig's parents if he could dance with their elder daughter, Solveig. Solveig is a beautiful girl of about fifteen who seems to be very innocent but at the same time she is the one who is looking for Peer. She tells him at the beginning of the play: "Are you the boy who wants to be dancing?"(Ibsen, 1993: 24)

Looking for Peer together with her parents and his mother Aase, Solveig is interested in knowing everything about Peer.

Solveig: Please tell me some more.

Aase: O, my son, you mean?

Solveig: Yes. Everything.

Aase: Everything? You would get tired on less.

Solveig: You would get tired of telling before I should of hearing, I'm sure.

(Ibsen, 1993: 36)

[14] Ibsen, Henrik. *Peer Gynt A Dramatic Poem*. Trans. by John Northam. Oslo: Scandinavian U.P., 1993, p. 23

Later on, in the third act Solveig is so much in love with Peer that she comes on skies to Peer Gynt's hut announcing that she left her family in order to be with him. Solveig's separation from her sister and parents is extremely poetical and melancholic.

Solveig: I came at your bidding, and so you must take me. (…)

Nights that were heavy and days a mere flurry

Bore me the bidding that I must hurry. (…)

I have no-one to call either Dad or Ma.

I have cut off completely. (…)

You must be to me everything – friend and assister. (Ibsen, 1993: 60)

Although Peer is also in love with her and calls her his princess, "so bright and clear", "so slim and slight", "so lovely and warm", he leaves Solveig as he afraid that the Woman in Green and her ugly brat would interfere between him and Solveig. Although Peer decides to leave Solveig, he asks her to wait for him.

Peer: "Be patient, keep waiting;

A long time or short – keep on waiting." (Ibsen, 1993: 65)

Templeton gives a very plausible explanation for Peer's leaving and illustrates why Peer does not stay with Solveig and how he divides women into two opposing categories. Thus, "for Peer, women are either the "holy and pure" Solveig or the sexual ""witch" the Woman in Green, the good princess or the bad, the virgin or the temptress, only Mary or only Eve". (Templeton, 1999: 101) Templeton adds that "Peer's refusal of Solveig's sexuality reflects his refusal to become an adult man". (Templeton, 1999: 101) I could say that this means that Solveig is more mature than Peer although she is younger than him. Despite of the fact that she is a still a teen-ager, almost a child, she deserted her family in order to be with Peer and was ready to become a wife and a mother. On the other hand, Peer is not prepared for the role of a husband, a father and he is more concerned about enjoying life and having fun.

In *The Lady from the Sea*, the young painter Lyngstrand also asks Bolette to dream about him while he is in Rome and at the same time he has an optimistic vision about the future.

Lyngstrand tells Bolette: "It would be such a joy to me to know that you were at home thinking of me….Oh, some miracle or other might happen. A happy turn of fate – or something of that sort. For I am convinced that fortune is on my side".[15]

Thus, I could point out the big difference between Solveig and Bolette. Solveig spends all her life waiting for Peer, while Bolette decides to marry Arnholm, her teacher in order to educate herself and see the world. Despite of the fact that Peer may never come back, Solveig sacrifices her life waiting for Peer without having any complaint or regret. Thus, love becomes for her a religion and her waiting is a real joy.

Xie Lanlan shows that Solveig is both a traditional and a radical heroine. Lanlan explains that Solveig is on the one hand traditional because she sacrifices her entire her to one man and on the other hand, she is radical because she chooses to leave her family and be with an outcast who hides himself in the forest "hunted by the law enforcement authorities for snatching a bride".[16] (Lanlan, 2005: 176 – 177) Nygaard claims that Solveig's destiny can be interpreted as "the situation of thousands of Norwegian women" who dedicated their lives to their families and farms. (Nygaard, 1997: 46)
At the end of the play in final scene of the fifth act, Peer returns to Norway and is desperately trying to save himself from the devil, represented by the Button-Moulder. Peer "throws himself down on the threshold" (Ibsen, 1993:169) of Solveig's hut and asks Solveig and says: "If you've sentenced on a sinner, then noise it abroad!" (Ibsen, 1993: 169)

Unlike Lona Hessel from *Pillars of Society* or Ella Rentheim from *John Gabriel Borkman* who reproach everything to the men who deserted them, Solveig not only that is really happy to see Peer but she also thanks him for making her life a "lovely refrain". She exclaims happily:

He's here! O he's here! Praise be the lord! (…)

You've not sinned ever, my dearest boy! (…)

You have turned my whole life a lovely refrain.

Blessing upon you for coming again!

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[15] Ibsen, Henrik. *Rosmersholm. The Lady from the Sea*. Introd. by William Archer. Vol. IX. London: William Heinemann. 1919, p. 280

[16] Lanlan, Xie. "Peer Gynt's Female World", *Ibsen Studies*. Vol. V. No. 2. Oslo: Centre for Ibsen Studies, 2005. pp. 176 - 177

Blest be our meeting this Pentecost time! (Ibsen, 1993: 169)

In his introduction to *Peer Gynt*, John Northam illustrates the significance of Peer's return to Solveig on Whitsunday or Pentecost. Thus, Whitsunday is a very important Christian celebration in which the Holy Spirit descends to earth and it has a meaning of salvation to the whole world. (Ibsen, 1993: Xvi) Returning to *Peer Gynt*, Solveig represents an alternative for Peer's damnation, as she is the faithful woman full of hope, optimism and generosity who saves him from the threat of the Button - Moulder. The next quotation from the ending of the play is a very famous one:

Peer: "Where was I, with my forehead stamped with God's seal?"

Solveig: "In my faith, in my hope, my love's charity". (Ibsen, 1993: 170)

Lanlan portrays Solveig as "the light character who elevates the mind and creates an atmosphere of sanctity". (Lanlan, 2005:172) At the same time Lanlan analyses Solveig from a Freudian point of view and asserts that this heroine represents Peer's superego. Joan Templeton portrays Solveig as "deus ex machina", or "the pure and later redemptive Gretchen". (Templeton, 1999: 106 – 107) Ibsen emphasises Peer's happiness and his gratitude to Solveig as he finally calls her both mother and wife in the final scene of the fifth act.

Peer: "My mother; wife, you innocent woman!

O take me, take me to your bosom! (*clings to her tightly, burying his face in her lap. A long silence. The sun rises*)" (Ibsen, 1993:170)

In her introduction to *The Pillars of the Community, The Wild Duck and Hedda Gabler*, Uma Ellis-Fermor makes a comparison between Lona and Solveig, two women who save the men they love "by preserving the image of the man he should have been" (Ibsen, 1993: 11).

I could also say that Solveig can be regarded as the embodiment of the eternal feminine, a solution, a salvation for Peer, the witness who can redeem him.

5. Two Unhappy Women Unfulfilled Matrimonially: Marta Bernick and Ella Rentheim

This chapter deals with the resemblances and differences between the devoted unmarried women from *Pillars of Society* (1877) and *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896). I will analyse Martha Bernick from *Pillars of Society* and Ella Rentheim from *John Gabriel Borkman* and the way they sacrificed their lives to the benefit of other people. Why did these heroines sacrifice their lives and how did theses heroines regard marriage? These are some of the questions they I try to answer in this chapter.
Marriage is the destiny traditionally offered to women by society and as Simone de Beauvoir asserts in *The Second Sex*, it is different for men and women because in the past only men were "socially independent and complete" individuals. (Beauvoir, 1953:416)

Marta Bernick from *Pillars of Society* is Karsten Bernick's unmarried sister who according to Albert Morey Sturtevant "typifies woman's traditional virtues of patience and devotion, suffering under the existing social order whose dictum she refuses to accept".[17] She sacrificed her happiness and wasted her life waiting for Johan Tønnesen, a man who did not know about her love. Beauvoir asserts that the worst thing that could happen to the woman in love is that the man she dreams of "may cease to love her" and "he may love another woman". (Beauvoir, 1953: 626) In Marta's case, Johan has never loved her and has never known that she was in love with him. But when he came back to Norway, he fell in love with the young Dina Dorf. Marta reveals her secret love for him to Lona Hessel and the scene where she speaks about her fruitless love and suffering is extremely sad and lyrical. Marta confesses to Lona:
I loved him and waited for him. Each summer I expected him to come. And then he came – but he didn't see me (…) We were the same age when he went away; but when I saw him again – oh, that awful moment – I realised that I was ten years older than he. He'd

[17]Sturtevant, Albert Morey. "The Women Characters in Ibsen's Samfundets Støtter: A Comparison with the Earlier Versions of the Play". *Scandinavian Studies*. Vol. 10, 1928 – 1929, p. 133

been living out in the bright clear sunshine, breathing in youth and health with every breath; and I sat here in the shade, spinning and spinning – (Ibsen, 1961:84 – 85). According to Anthony Giddens, many people "were subjected to discipline of dull, repetitive labour" in the period of modernity.[18] Thus, one could say that Marta looked ten years older than Johan because of her dull and repetitive work as a teacher and of her suffering in silence.

Giddens also speaks about the relationship between trust and inaction and he contradicts Luhmann's statement that "if you refrain from action you run no risk". (Giddens, 1992: 32) Thus, he claims that "inaction is often risky, and there are some risks which we all have to face whether we like it or not". (Giddens, 1992: 32) Applying Giddens's theories on Marta's case, I could say that Marta's long and painful suffering in silence could have been stopped if she had told Johan what she felt about him. Maybe she would have married Johan or maybe she would have married somebody else if Johan had rejected her.

Rolf Danielsen asserts that new jobs and career opportunities for women appeared in the 19th century. He also claims that "the women in the workforce were young and unmarried, very few remaining in paid work once they were married. Widows were the exception seeking employment from necessity. This pattern did not change until after The Second World War".[19] Thus, this idea can be also applied for the unmarried women of this play, Marta who works as a teacher and Lona who had different jobs in America. Although Marta has been a very good sister to Bernick, a household helper and guardian of the orphaned, Dina Dorf, her brother is quite ungrateful to her as he speaks about her to Johan. "Yes, and married very well; she's had several excellent offers – strangely enough! A spinster without means, no longer young, and totally insignificant!" (Ibsen, 1961: 44)

Templeton compares Marta Bernick to Juliana Tesman from *Hedda Gabler* and claims that they are both "the good spinsters" who devote their lives to a male relation. The only difference is that Miss Tesman "clings to the object of her sacrifice" (Templeton, 1999:

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[18] Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992, p.8

[19] Danielsen, Rolf. *Norway: A History from the Vikings to Our Own Times*. Oslo: Scandinavian U.P., 1995, p. 289

213) whereas Miss Marta Bernick realises that she had sacrificed her life to a man who did not even know about her love.

As Giddens states "modernity is often marked by the appetite for the new" (Giddens, 1992: 39), Marta is also fascinated by America and the freedom from there. Therefore, she encourages Dina Dorf to go to America and not to come back to Norway. She also confesses to Dina that she dreamt about going to America for so many years. At the same time one could remark Martha's unselfish behaviour towards Dina, the girl who marries the man she (Martha) loved. However, I could say that it is extremely surprising and generous for Marta to encourage Dina to marry Johan, the love of her life. Thus, she advises Dina to go to America and not to come back Norway.

Miss Bernick: Never, I'm afraid! Promise me never to come back here, Dina. (*Seizes her hands and gazes at her*.) Now go to your happiness, my dearest child – over the sea. How often have I sat in the schoolroom and longed to be over there! It must be lovely there; the horizon must be wider; the air freer overhead – (Ibsen, 1961: 83)

Bjørn Hemmer states that the Norwegian society cannot accept Dina and Johan's happiness and that the only two persons who encourage the couple to be together are Marta and Lona who had been in love with men who did not share their feelings.[20]

As Sturtevant claims, although Marta has the same dreams and ideals about freedom, equality between sexes and immigration, she is a passive woman who is "doing good whenever she could, a blessing to the community". (Sturtevant, 1928-1929:132)

Ella Rentheim is one of the main female characters in *John Gabriel Borkman* who sacrifices her entire life for the man who deserted her and married her twin-sister, Gunhild. In the first act Ella meets her sister, Gunhild and they quarrel over the fate of Erhart, Gunhild's son. Although it had been nearly eight years since they saw each other, the conflict between these two sisters over Erhart is still the same. Miss Ella Rentheim "resembles her sister; but her face reveals suffering rather than hardness of expression".[21] Both Gunhild and Ella seem to be obsessed with something. Thus, on the one hand

[20] Hemmer, Bjørn. "Ibsen and the Realistic Problem Drama". *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*. Ed. by James McFarlane. Cambridge: Cambridge U. P., 1994, p. 78

[21] Ibsen, Henrik. *The Wild Duck and Other Plays*. Trans. and ed. by Eva Le Galliene. New York: The Modern Library, 1961, p. 370

Gunhild is obsessed with the fact that her husband, a very important financer lost everything and went to jail and she had to bear the shame of the family. On the other hand, Ella is obsessed with the fact that John Gabriel Borkman, the protagonist of the play left her and married her sister. When Ella hears from her sister, Gunhild that she and John Gabriel Borkman lived in the same house for eight years without seeing each other, she judges her sister's behaviour by saying: "You have a hard heart, Gunhild". (Ibsen, 1961: 370)

Gunhild confesses to her sister, Ella that she wants to redeem her good name, her fortune, her honour and her ruined life destroyed by her husband's bankruptcy. Thus, she has plans for her son, Erhart, the only person who could atone for all the past.

Gunhild: "Erhart's first duty is to win such a brilliant position for himself that no one will dare to remember the shadow his father has cast over our lives". (Ibsen, 1961: 372)

Gunhild's plans about her son show that as Simone de Beauvoir claims, mothers regard their sons as their double, their alter ego, although the son is an independent human being. (Beauvoir, 1953:495) On the other hand, Ella who was in a way luckier than her sister because her securities remained untouched educated Erhart for eight years and wanted him to become a happy human being. Ella, who loved Erhart as much as Gunhild, had different plans for her nephew. In this way, she tells her sister what she really wishes: "I want to free him from your power, your will, your influence". "I want his affection, his soul, his whole heart -!" (Ibsen, 1961: 379)

As Ella claims, that is not the first time when the two sisters fought over a human being. The long fight over Erhart has roots in the past namely in the fact that Gunhild married John Gabriel Borkman, the man who courted and loved Ella. The discussion between Ella and John Gabriel Borkman in the second act reveals Ella's painful suffering due to the fact that twenty years before she was deserted by the man she loved. Even at the beginning of their conversation Ella reminds John Gabriel Borkman of their relationship saying:. "It is "your Ella"…as you used to call me once; in the old days – many years ago". (…) "The years have been hard on me. Don't you think so, Borkman?" (…) "I no longer have dark curls, Borkman. Those curls you loved to twine around your fingers". (Ibsen, 1961: 401- 402)

From the very beginning Ella reproaches Borkman that he left her and she wasted her life in vain thinking about him. She tells him that: "It seems like an eternity since we saw each other last, Borkman". "A whole life passed. A wasted lifetime". (Ibsen, 1961: 402)

However, John Gabriel Borkman defends himself by saying that Ella should have married the lawyer, Hinkel, the man who likewise wooed Ella. Furthermore, he blames Ella for his bankruptcy, for her unhappiness and adds that he left her fortune intact, although he could have taken it and used it as he did with all the rest.

Borkman: "You've only yourself to blame for all that, Ella". (Ibsen, 1961: 403)

Ella is still not satisfied with this answer and wants to know why Borkman deserted her and married another woman without loving her. She accuses him saying: "And yet many years had passed, since you deserted me, and married – married another!" (…) "So you deserted me – for higher motifs". (Ibsen, 1961: 405)

One could make a parallel between Ella Rentheim and Lona Hessel from *Pillars of Society*, two women who were deserted by the men they loved. Lona Hessel loved Bernick very much but he deserted her and married Betty because he needed her money. He explains to Lona the truth without any remorse.

Bernick: "I didn't love Betty at that time; it wasn't fickleness that made me break up with you – it was the money. I simply *had* to have it (Ibsen, 1961: 49).

Bernick explains his betrayal by saying that she would have never been happy with him. He claims: "Believe me, Lona – you would never have been happy with me" (Ibsen, 1961: 50).

Templeton makes a comparison between Bernick and John Gabriel Borkman and claims that they are both unscrupulous financiers who betrayed the women they loved and married other women in order to be rich and successful. (Templeton, 1999: 292) However, Lona's disappointment and betrayal in love did not affect her life so much it affected Ella's. Thus, Lona went to America and became a free and independent woman. Lona Hessel is the opposite of Betty Bernick, Marta Bernick and Ella Rentheim and as Sturtevant states she "represents the new type of woman with all the unconventional eccentricities of which society did not approve, appearing in the role of a militant social reformer". (Sturtevant, 1928-1929: 132) She is the one who comes back to Norway and

encourages her former lover Bernick, a mercantile hypocrite and a liar to tell the truth about his past and about himself.

Lona was identified with Ibsen's alter ego and she is the one who gives the conclusion of the play. Lona: "Then you've learned a piece of nonsense, brother-in-law! Don't believe it! (*Puts her hands firmly on his shoulder*) Truth and the Spirit of Freedom – they're the *real* Pillars of Society! (Ibsen, 1961: 102) Her last statement could be interpreted as an argument for the equality between men and women stressing the importance of truth and freedom in the modern society.

Templeton compares the protagonist of the play, John Gabriel Borkman with Karsten Bernick from *Pillars of Society* and with Sigurd from *The Vikings at Helgeland*. According to Templeton, all these three men "sacrifice love for higher considerations". (Templeton, 1999:292)

Returning to the discussion between Ella and Borkman, Ella tells Borkman that if he had married her, she would have treated him differently than Gunhild and she would have supported him morally and helped him recover from that financial ruin.

Ella: "If you'd only been allowed me to be beside you, close to you – when the storm broke over you –" (…) "Believe me, I would have borne the ruin, the shame, the disgrace with you gladly. I would have helped you bear it, Borkman -" (Ibsen, 1961: 406)

As Ella claims, Borkman committed a "great unpardonable sin" that he murdered the love in a human soul. Ella's accusation and revolt is even stronger than before as she states that he killed both her and his soul when he deserted her. Her accusation is extremely vehement:

You're a murderer! You are guilty of the one mortal sin! (…) You've killed love in me. Robbed my whole life of tenderness. (…)The great unpardonable sin to murder love in a human soul! (…)I was the woman you loved, and you deserted me! You were ready to sacrifice the one you held dearest in the world for money and for power. You have been twice guilty of murder. You've not only killed my soul – you've killed your own as well! (Ibsen, 1961: 406 – 407)

However, despite of Ella's protest, Borkman has no values such as love and does not have any remorse about his betrayal. Moreover, as Astrid Sæther asserts in her article

one of her articles "women are replaceable" for John Gabriel Borkman.[22] Borkman expresses his options in very direct and cruel way: "But I am a man; I see things differently. It's true that as a woman I held you dearest in the world. But if the worst comes to the world – one woman can always take the place of another". (Ibsen, 1961: 407)

This is a very cruel remark that makes a difference between the values in a man's life and the values in a woman's life.

Borkman's dream and vision of power represents as Sæther claims "the Titanistic depiction of the great lonely man" which "is typical of literature written in the 1890's". (Sæther, 1997: 38) At the same time, Professor Sæther explains that the protagonist suffers "from subjective fantasies of omnipotence". (38) This can be emphasised in Borkman's desire for power which was uncontrollable. Thus he wanted "to become the master of all wealth that lay hidden in the earth, in the mountains, the forests and the sea". (Ibsen, 1961: 407) Ella's vision of life is exactly the opposite of Borkman, namely that Ella's system is based on love while Borkman's system is based on success.

Rønning states the importance of money in society. According to him, family was strongly connected economy and politics. Furthermore, he claims that money is very significant and determines the relationship between people. (Rønning, 2006: 33) This idea can be found in some plays by Ibsen such as *John Gabriel Borkman*, *Pillars of Society*, *The Lady from the Sea* and *Ghosts*.

Ella explains to Borkman how she felt after he had left her and how much this state of loneliness and despair affected her that she could not love anybody or anything except for one person, Borkman's son, Erhart. She remembers how miserable she was: "As time passed it became harder and harder for me – and at last utterly impossible to love any loving soul. Neither people, nor animals, nor plants. There was just one."(…) "Erhart". (Ibsen, 1961: 408)

Templeton explains that Ella loved only Erhart and nobody else because Erhart "was flesh of the flesh she loved". (Templeton, 1999: 297) At the same time she also adds that "just as Borkman was the only man she could love, his child was the only child

[22] Sæther, Astrid. "Female Expectations and Male Ambitions in Ibsen's Late Plays". *Proceedings: Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. International Seminar and Workshop. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997, p. 39

she could love, his child was the only child she could mother, and since he cheated her of conceiving it, she would take it away from the woman who did". (Templeton, 1999: 297 – 298)

In my opinion love, marriage and motherhood were and still are very important for women and this can be exemplified in Ella's case. Ella reproaches it directly to her former lover, Borkman. For Ella happiness meant love, marriage and motherhood. That is why she reproaches Borkman saying: "You cheated me of a mother's joy and happiness in life". (Ibsen, 1961: 409)

Beauvoir explains the importance and the advantages of marriage that make women find both energy for living and meaning for life. (Beauvoir, 1953:435) According to Beauvoir, celibacy reduces women to parasites and pariahs and makes women remain a servant of a father, of a brother or of other relatives. (Beauvoir, 1953:416 – 418) This example is in a way Marta Bernick's case, an unmarried woman who despite of the fact that she worked, she lived in her brother's house and helped him in the household.

Beauvoir underlines the fact that many women were very much concerned about getting married. As Beauvoir states, "the desire for marriage is the desire for security". (Beauvoir, 1953:629) At the same time she also asserts the great importance women placed upon love. Thus, according to Beauvoir "love is woman's supreme accomplishment". (Beauvoir, 1953:632)

Ella also tells Borkman that she suffers from an incurable disease due to "some great stress of emotion" (Ibsen, 1961: 410) and that doctors told her that she would not survive that winter. In his chapter "The land without Paradise" from his book *Ibsen the Romantic*, Errol Durbach states that the disease Ella is suffering from is cancer[23]. She asks Borkman to let Erhart bear her family name, Rentheim so that her name would not be obliterated after her death. Orley I. Holtan states that Ella asks Borkman "exactly what she fears for herself, the complete obliteration of the name of Borkman"[24]. She asks Borkman: "When I die the name of Borkman will die with me. That's such a bitter

[23] Durbach, Errol. *Ibsen the Romantic. Analogues of Paradise in the Later Plays*. London: Macmillan Press, 1982, p. 81

[24] Holtan, Orley I. *Mythic Patterns in Ibsen's Latest Plays*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1970, p. 137

thought. To be whipped out of existence, even to one's very name –" "Let Erhart bear my name!" (Ibsen, 1961: 412) Borkman's answer is as Holtan says "an evidence of dignity already cited". (Holtan, 1970: 137) Borkman replies: "Very well, Ella. I am man enough to bear my own name alone". (Ibsen, 1961:412)

My opinion is that Ella's wish that Erhart would bear her family name is debatable. On the one hand, it is well known that usually women change their maiden family name after marriage and bear their husband's name after marriage. There are also exceptions to this rule such as ordinary women and also famous women: women-writers, singers, actresses, women in the media and so on who wish to keep their maiden name after marriage. Some women prefer to keep their maiden name to show respect or gratitude to their father, others such as well-known women want to be remembered with their maiden name, a name that made them famous. On the other hand, parents who have only daughters usually expect their family name to disappear even if their daughters marry or not. There are also some cases when their name can be born by their daughter's children. Returning to Ella Rentheim, I could say that she wanted her nephew to bear her name because she felt lonely and unhappy and she loved Erhart as if he were her own son.

Despite of the fact that Borkman deserted her, Ella still has the compassion for Borkman. She is the only person who cares about Borkman and who encourages Erhart to stay with his father and help him in his work.

The same famous triangle of a man standing between two opposing women can be also seen in *John Gabriel Borkman*. Thus, as Templeton claims Ella is the feminine woman, the gentle woman with "silvery white hair" and her Latinate name, while Gunhild is the masculine strong woman with "iron-gray hair and Valkyrie name". (Templeton, 1999: 292) At the same time Aarseth asserts that Ella, the forsaken woman could be regarded as the darling and that there are no demonic aspects in this play. (Aarseth, 1997: 18)

It is worth mentioning that despite of the fight between the two sisters over Erhart, Erhart does not want to stay at home with his mother, father or aunt and he prefers to go to Italy with his lover, Fanny Wilton, a divorced woman older than him. One could remark the opposition between Gunhild's and John Gabriel Borkman's plans for the

future and Erhart's dreams only about present. Thus, the son clearly states: "I don't care about the future – I only know this means all of life to me!" (Ibsen, 1961: 425)

Holtan explains the difference between old Borkman and his son, Erhart regarding the importance of career. Thus, for Borkman career and success are the most important things in life; this could be seen in the fact that Borkman sacrificed his love for Ella in order to gain more power, whereas his son thinks that love is more important than career. (Holtan, 1970: 148 – 149)

In the forth act of play Ella is the one who follows John Gabriel Borkman out of the house to the place where they used to sit and dream about the future twenty years before. Ella reproaches Borkman again the fact that he destroyed her life by leaving her. I could also say that it is surprising why Ella does not reproach her sister, Gunhild the fact that she married Borkman and she only says it to her former lover. In my opinion a good and devoted sister does not marry her sister's lover or fiancé.

At the end of the play Ella still remembers how happy she was and could have been with Borkman and her prophecy is that Borkman could never accomplish his dream because he had sold her. Her prophecy is remarkably significant:

Ella: Yes, now – as always, John – your love lies buried there. But here – in the light of the day – there was a warm human heart that yearned for you. And you took that heart and crushed it. You did worse than that, far worse! You sold it! (…) Sold it for – The Kingdom, the Power and the Glory – yes! (…) And because of this I prophesy, John Gabriel Borkman: you will never receive the price you demand for that murder. You will never enter in triumph your cold, dark kingdom! (Ibsen, 1961: 438)

Daniel Haakonsen claims that John Gabriel Borkman represents the "*doomed hero"* whose death is result of moral judgment pronounced by Ella Rentheim.[25] Haakonsen also gives a significant remark about the ending of this play. Thus, he asserts that although Ella's "heart is broken as a result of John Gabriel Borkman's betrayal, yet it is John Gabriel himself who dies of a heart attack". (Haakonsen, 1965: 32)

Sæther presents the opposition between John Gabriel Borkman's fate and Erhart's fate at the end of the play. Thus, while the father dies of a heart attack, his son decides to

[25] Haakonsen, Daniel. "The Function of Sacrifice in Ibsen's Realistic Drama". *Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen. Proceedings of the First International Seminary*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1965, p. 23

leave Norway with his lover, Fanny Wilton and with Frida Foldal and go south in order to accomplish their dreams. (Sæther, 1997: 39)

John Gabriel Borkman was regarded by Orley I. Holtan as one of the most pessimistic plays by Ibsen where "all alternatives for human happiness seem closed or at least highly doubtful". (Holtan, 1970: 152) Still there is some hope regarding Erhart's future who wants to be free and happy.

At the end of play, Ibsen presents the two sisters who lost both Erhart temporarily, the son they both loved and John Gabriel Borkman, the man they both loved who died of a heart attack, reaching hands as "the two shadows – over the dead man". (Ibsen, 440) In this chapter I analysed how unmarried women sacrificed their lives for the men they loved and the next chapter I will analyse another unmarried heroine who is a devoted aunt.

6. An Aunt Who Is Never Tired of Sacrificing Herself

Another female character from the same category extremely attached to her family is **Juliane Tesman** from *Hedda Gabler*. Although Aunt Julle, as her nephew calls her, is a minor character who appears only in the first and in the forth act, she is an interesting altruistic character different from Martha from *Pillars of Society*. Unlike Marta who can be regarded as the woman in love with Johan Tønnesen, Juliana Tesman was not in love with anybody and was not deserted by anybody. In the first act of the play she and Berte, the Tesman's servant are very happy about Jørgen Tesman's marriage with General Gabler's daughter, Hedda. Both Miss Tesman and Berte consider this marriage as Orley I. Holtan claims "a triumph won by the adored nephew, a triumph comparable to the earning of a doctor's degree". (Holtan, 1970: 87) At the same time Juliane Tesman, "a comely, sweet-tempered woman of about sixty-five, well but simply dressed in grey

outdoor clothes" [26]expresses her admiration for Hedda with respect while talking to Berte.

Miss Tesman: "You can understand, can't you, with General Gabler's daughter? Think what she was accustomed to in the General's day. Do you remember her riding along the road with her father? In that long black habit? And feather in her hat?"(Ibsen, 1950: 265)

She also expresses her optimism to her nephew and congratulates him for winning Hedda's heart. "But just think, Jørgen, you're a married man! And to think it was you who carried off Hedda Gabler! The lovely Hedda Gabler! To think of it! She, who always had so *many* admirers". (Ibsen, 1950: 268)

Juliane Tesman behaves like a mother to her brother's son, Jørgen and she is eager to see him with his wife the very morning they returned from their five-month honeymoon. Templeton states that Miss Tesman and Jørgen represent "an affectionate couple of worship, adoptive mother and attentive surrogate son". (Templeton, 1999: 212) As Anne Marie Rekdal asserts, Aunt Julle is careful in her role as a mother to her nephew and at the same time she is also maternal in her relation to Hedda.[27] Their mutual attachment can also be seen in the scene where Miss Tesman brings a nice gift for Jørgen that is his old morning slippers embroidered by his ill aunt Rita. However, Jørgen's wife, Hedda insists that she is particularly not interested in seeing those slippers. One could also see the difference between the two spouses namely that as Rekdal claims Hedda was raised in a general's house while Jørgen Tesman was raised by his aunts. (Rekdal, 1998: 238)

Jørgen Tesman is as much attached to his Aunt as she is attached to him. Thus, Tesman is very grateful and nice to his dear Aunt Julle and this makes Juliane Tesman really happy.

Tesman: "So it is for me, Aunt Julle, to see you again! You who've been my father and my mother". (…) "Oh, Aunt Julle, you will never be tired of sacrificing yourself for me". (Ibsen, 271)

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[26] Ibsen, Henrik. *The Pillars of Community. The Wild Duck. Hedda Gabler*. Trans. by Una Ellis- Fermor. Harmondsworth: Penguin Book, 1950, p. 264

[27] Rekdal, Anne Marie. *Frihetens dilemma. Ibsen med Lacan.* Trondheim: Norges teknisk-naturvitenskapelige universitet, 1998, p. 239

I could also point out another difference between Juliane Tesman and Marta Bernick. Thus, on the one hand, Juliane Tesman sacrificed her life for her nephew but he respects her and treats her nicely. On the other hand, Marta sacrifices her life for her brother, Karsten Bernick while he considers her "a spinster without means, no longer young, and totally insignificant!" (Ibsen, 1961: 44)

At the same time one can observe the fact that Miss Tesman is very much concerned about Hedda's opinion about her. When her nephew admirers her new "fine, smart" hat, Juliane Tesman replies that she bought it "so that Hedda shan't be ashamed of me if we go out together". (Ibsen, 1961: 267) However, there is an irony about Miss Juliane Tesman's attempt to impress Hedda and Hedda's impolite comment about that hat.

Hedda: "My dear, we shall never be able to manage with this maid".(…) "Look there. She's left her old hat behind her on the chair". (Ibsen, 1950: 274)

Aunt Julle's reply is still polite and she explains to Hedda that it is not Berte's hat, but her hat and that it was the first time she wore that hat. Later on, at the beginning of in the forth act Miss Juliane Tesman is talking to Hedda about the death of her sister, Rina. Despite of this unhappy event, she tells Hedda that "Rina should have never died at such a moment. Hedda's home ought not to be sad just now". (Ibsen, 1950: 347)

Miss Tesman has a rather optimistic opinion about her future. Thus, she explains to her nephew and to Hedda that after her sister's death, her mission which could bring her happiness and satisfaction is to take care of sick people. Miss Tesman claims:

Dear Rina's little room won't stay empty, I know. (…) Oh, there is always some poor sick person or other who needs care and attention, unfortunately. (…) Well, thank God there may be things here, too, of one sort and another that an old aunt can lend a hand with. (Ibsen, 1950: 348)

Miss Juliane Tesman is an altruistic and self-sacrificing female character who accepts her situation without complaining or regretting and who is eager to help both her relatives and sick people who need help. Therefore, she can be regarded as the prototype of the good and devoted woman who can accept life as it is.

7. A Naïve Woman who became Conscious and Took Initiative: Betty Bernick

Betty Bernick, Karsten Bernick's wife represents the traditional woman so called "the womanly woman". Templeton claims that "to be feminine is be co-operative, expressive, focused on home and family, gentle, helpful, intuitive, naïve, nurturing, sensitive, sympathetic, tender and weak" (Templeton, 1999: 330).

Betty Bernick has all these qualities and faults and as Albert Morey Sturtevant asserts Betty "typifies the compliant submissive wife, living in complete slavery to convention and to her husband's will. (Sturtevant, 1928 -1929: 132)

She is the typical feminine woman, an adoring wife to her husband a caring mother to her thirteen-year-old son Olaf. Betty is rejecting all the new customs especially those of the Americans and praising her husband for his strict moral principles.

Mrs. Bernick: "Don't think these disgraceful American customs will be accepted here -"

Mrs. Bernick: "You can't expect a man like Karsten, with his strict moral principles". (Ibsen, 1961: 48)

She is forgiving her husband for his superiority to her and to the other women easily. At the same time she is too sensitive and cries a lot. She takes her husband's side while talking to Lona Hessel and shows her indignation to Lona.

Mrs. Bernick: "You've always envied me, my happiness. And now you've come here to spoil it all – to show the whole town the kind of family I've saddled Karsten with. I'm the one who has to suffer for it – and that's what you want, I suppose. (She goes out crying by the second door on the left".) (Ibsen, 1961: 48)

Betty Bernick is a weak rather naïve woman who thought that her marriage was a happy one based on love and commitment. At the end of the play she realises that Bernick never really loved her and remarks: "For many years I've thought that you were once mine, but I'd lost you. Now I know that you were never really mine, but I intend to win you" (Ibsen, 1961: 99).

Her marriage is also an unhappy one because Karsten Bernick married her without loving her only because she was a better catch than Lona Hessel, his former lover.

Rolf Danielsen shows that the late age of marriage (for men the average age was 27 – 29 and for women one or two years earlier) together with the threat of different types of epidemic made the birth rate in Norway be rather low. (Danielsen, 1995: 133) That is why I could say that in most of Ibsen's plays there is only one or sometimes there are two children in the family. Thus, there is only one child, Olaf in *Pillars of Society* (1877), one in *Ghosts* (1881) Oswald who is not a child anymore but a grown-up, one child, Hedvig in *The Wild Duck* (1884). In *John Gabriel Borkman* (1896) there is also only one child, Erhart, who is a grown-up and in *The Little Eyolf* there is one child, Eyolf. There are no children in *Rosmersholm* (1886) and in *When We Dead Awaken* (1889). In some plays there are some children who died in their infancy such as in Ellida's child who died after he was born in *The Lady from the Sea* (1888), Solness's two twins who died in their infancy in *The Master Builder* (1892)

Danielsen claims that "the higher the social group to which a woman belonged, the earlier she married" (Danielsen, 1995: 140 – 141). This theory could be also applied to some of Ibsen's plays such as *Pillars of Society* and *The Little Eyolf*. Thus, both Karsten Bernick marries Betty Tønnesen and Alfred Allmers marries Rita because these two women are rich.

However, I could say that at the end of the play in the forth act Betty is no longer the same weak and naïve woman as she was before. Thus, she takes initiative and she is the one who finds and saves her son, Olaf who was on the board of *The Indian Girl*, a ship that was improperly repaired by Bernick and that was about to leave to America. Betty proudly explains with many details to her husband how she searched for their son together with Aune, their shipwright and how they finally succeeded in stopping the ship until the next day.

Mrs. Bernick: Do you think a mother has no eyes? I was desperately afraid you might hear about it. A word of words he let slip yesterday - ; and then his room was empty, and his knapsack and his clothes were missing. (…) I ran as fast as I could and got hold of Aune; and we went out in his boat; the American ship was just about to sail.

Thank God, we arrived in time. We got on the board - we searched the hold - and found him. Oh, Karsten, you mustn't punish him! (Ibsen, 1961: 91)

Betty's final awakening reminds one of Nora, but her gesture does not signify a dramatic change but only a simple maturity and adaptation to the challenges of life.

8. Thea Elvsted's "Child"

Another female character who is also in a subordinate position is **Thea Elvsted** from *Hedda Gabler*. The difference between Betty Bernick and Thea is that Betty is extremely attached to her husband while Thea is attached to her friend and lover, Ejlert Løvborg.

Thea can be also seen in an opposition to Hedda Gabler; thus while Thea is the light woman, the darling while Hedda, the protagonist of the play is the dark woman, aggressive, masculine and rebelling, the demon. (Aarseth, 1997:14) As Templeton says Thea is "a model of the true, maternal woman who represents the normal femininity against Hedda's perverse phallicism". (Templeton, 1999: 209)

From the first time she enters Jørgen Tesman's house in the first act until the forth act, Thea is very worried, restless and concerned about the fate of Ejlert Løvborg, her lover who was also the tutor of her step-children. In the first act Thea confesses to Hedda, her former colleague from school how miserable she is with her husband, the District Magistrate.

Thea: "I'm miserable with him. We haven't an idea in common, he and I. Not a thing in the world". (Ibsen, 1950: 285)

Thea also gives Hedda more details about her five-year unhappy marriage of convenience with the District Magistrate, a man who was more than twenty years older than her whom she first worked as governess and housekeeper.

Thea: "Oh, I don't know *what* he feels. I think I'm just useful to him. After all, it doesn't cost me much to keep me. I'm cheap". "He isn't really fond of anyone but himself. And perhaps the children – a little". (Ibsen, 1950: 285 – 286)

Thea is at the same time a complex heroine because she is on the one hand mild, feminine, caring, and a bit shy in relation to Hedda, Jørgen Tesman and Løvborg. On the other hand, she is radical and decisive in relation to her husband for good because she tells Hedda that she left her husband without announcing him.

Thea: "I'm never going back there to him". (Ibsen, 1950: 287)

In my opinion Nora from *A Doll's House* is more honest than Thea first because Nora does not have a lover and secondly because Nora leaves Torvald after a discussion between them and an explanation given by her, while Thea leaves the District Magistrate without telling him. However, Hedda asks Thea how she dared to take that risk and what people might say about it. Beauvoir asserts that if a woman goes with another man she risks "losing her reputation and her status as married woman". (Beauvoir, 1953:526) Thea's unconventional reply shocks Hedda and also the readers. At the same time it also explains Thea's strong love and attachment for Løvborg. She expresses her great love for Løvborg saying: "Heaven knows, they must say what they like". (…) "I have only done what I *had* to do". (…) "I only know that I must live here, where Ejlert Løvborg lives. That is, if I *must* live". (Ibsen, 1950: 287)

Thea's influence to convince the Bohemian Løvborg give up drinking makes her a woman capable of love and generosity. Aarseth explains that Hedda cannot accept the relationship between Thea and Løvborg (Arseth, 1997: 14), her former lover and tries to manipulate him and win him back.

Thea proudly says to Hedda how happy she is after she "reclaimed him" and after he, for his part made her into "a real human being". (Ibsen, 1950: 288) Thea mentions her contribution for Løvborg's work where they worked together like two good comrades. Thea's quality to be Løvborg's helpmate makes her be one of the most intelligent women in Ibsen's plays endowed with writing skills. Beauvoir mentions the fact that "in some privileged cases the wife may succeed in becoming her husband's true companion, discussing his projects, giving him counsel, collaborating in his work". (Beauvoir, 1953: 459) Thea's case in not exactly Simone de Beauvoir's above – mentioned example because Thea does not collaborate with her husband but she finds joy in helping her lover, Løvborg. Beauvoir's case can be exemplified in *The Wild Duck* where Gina helps her husband Hjalmar Ekdal in his work as a photographer.

Golam Sarwar Chowdhury explains the difference between Hedda and Thea concerning the meaning of their existence. Thus, unlike Thea who seems to be bored and frustrated, Thea "had already discovered the meaning of her existence" and "knows that by inspiring a person in his creative life she can attain satisfaction" and become "a part of that fame and success"[28]

However, Thea's joy and happiness is endangered by "the shadow of a woman" from his past whom "he's never really forgotten" and who "wanted to shoot him with a pistol" when they parted. (Ibsen, 1950: 288) Thea is not so clever enough to see that the woman from Løvborg's past is actually Hedda Gabler and she assumes that it is the red-haired singer Løvborg once knew in a brothel.

In the second act Hedda Gabler is jealous on Thea's happiness with Løvborg and on the fact that she inspires him. Therefore, she tries and finally succeeds in convincing Løvborg start drinking again in order to prove that he has some power over him. Hedda's negative influence disappoints the mid and passive Thea who reproaches this to Hedda in a very polite way.

Thea: "Oh, Hedda, Hedda! Did you want this to happen?" (Ibsen, 1950: 321)

Thea seems to have a certain premonition about Løvborg's fate and she feels extremely restless the moment Løvborg leaves Tesman's house with Tesman and judge Brack. She claims: "Hedda, Hedda, where is all this going to end?"…"There's something behind all this, Hedda".

Hedda: "True; there is. I want, for once in my life, to have power over a human being's fate". (Ibsen, 1950: 324)

Despite of Hedda's reply about power above mentioned, the naïve Thea does not suspect how dangerous Hedda could be. The kind and caring Thea decides to stay awake and wait for her lover to come back to Tesman's house. However, to her disappointment, Løvborg arrives and tells her that they should break up. Ibsen presents Thea as a desperate woman in love ready to make all kinds of sacrifices and humiliations in order to be with her lover. Løvborg is very cruel with Thea maybe as cruel as John Gabriel

[28] Chowdhury, Golam Sarwar. "Nora, Hedda and Thea in Ibsen's Enchanting Drawing Room". *Proceedings: Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. International Ibsen Seminar and Workshop. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997, p. 30

Borkman was with Ella when he told her that one woman can always take the place of another. His cruel remark that he wants to break up with her because he does not need her anymore makes him a very impolite and rude character. Templeton characterises Løvborg as a weak and alcoholic man who "is unpromising both as a lover and a husband". (Templeton, 1999: 222) This idea can be observed in the cold way he treats Thea especially in the following line where he wants to break up with her:

Løvborg: Just this: our ways must part now. (…) Because I don't need you anymore, Thea.

Mrs.Elvsted: Not need me anymore! I can still help you, can't I, as I did before? Surely we are going on working together?

Løvborg: I don't propose to work in the future.

Mrs. Elvsted: [*in despair*]. What shall I do with my life, then?

Løvborg: You must try to go on living as though you had never known me.

Mrs. Elvsted: But I *can't* do that!

Løvborg: Try to, Thea. You must go home again -

Mrs. Elvsted: [*protesting fiercely*]. Never in this life! Where you are, there will I be too. I won't let myself be driven away like this. I will stay here and be with you when the book comes out. (Ibsen, 1950: 340 – 341)

Reading these lines, Thea could be regarded as a weak woman whose life depends entirely on her lover on the one hand, and on the other hand as a woman eager to fight for her rights over her lover. Another difference between Thea and Hedda is the way they think about society and people. Thus, as Asbjørn Aarseth states Hedda is "terribly afraid of a scandal" while Thea is not interested in the people's opinion about her and she "gives herself completely, leaving her husband and investing her social position completely in her project of saving Ejlert Løvborg from a second fall". (Aarseth, 1997:14 – 15)

Later on, at the end of the third act, Thea is very sad to find out that Løvborg's book would never come out and all of a sudden she becomes pessimistic about her future saying:

"Oh, I don't know myself what I'm going to do. Everything is dark ahead of me now". (Ibsen, 1950: 342)

Thea is extremely attached to Løvborg's book in which she has her own contribution and she calls it a child just as Irene from *When We Dead Awaken* is to her "child", Rubek's masterpiece, The Resurrection Day. Thus, she blames Løvborg for having lost the manuscript saying: "Do you know, Ejlert, this, what you have done to the book – all my life, it will seem to me as if you had killed a little child". (Ibsen, 1950: 342)

In the forth act Thea is still very worried about Løvborg especially after she went to his lodgings and heard "the most incredible rumours about him in the town". (Ibsen, 1950: 352) Therefore, Thea tells Tesman and Hedda that there is "only one explanation – something dreadful must have happened to him"! (Ibsen, 1950: 353) However, when judge Brack announces Tesman, Hedda and Thea that Løvborg is dying because he shot himself, Mrs. Elvsted accepts this unhappiness calmly with self control and without crying or doing any desperate things. She only cries out "My God! My God!" (Ibsen, 1950: 353) and expresses her wish to see him alive.

As Aarseth claims Thea, the darling figure in this play will not succeed despite of her efforts "but that does not mean that Hedda is victorious in the end as the outcome is fatal for both her admirer and herself". (Aarseth, 1997: 15)

At the end of the play, Thea becomes stronger than Hedda as she is able to live her life with all its fortunes and misfortunes and accept reality no matter how painful it may be. As Golam Sarwar Chowdhury explains "Thea has an optimism that is different from the perpetual ennui of Hedda". …"She knows that Løvborg's death does not signal the end of the world, and that despite her setback she has to go on living". (Chowdhury, 1997: 30 – 31) Thus, Thea decides to dedicate her life work together with Jørgen Tesman on Løvborg's loose notes and put them together so that Løvborg's name would be immortal. Thea's last wish in the play is to inspire Tesman as she inspired Løvborg and as Templeton says "Thea yearns to serve another man". (Templeton, 1999: 231)

Hedda: Doesn't it feel strange to you, Thea? Here you are sitting with Jørgen Tesman just as you once sat with Ejlert Løvborg?

Mrs. Elvsted: Well, if only I could inspire your husband too-

Hedda: Oh, that will come all right – in time. (Ibsen, 1950: 362)

It is worth mentioning Nygaard's opinion that Thea just like Mrs. Linde from *A Doll's House* are minor female characters who are "the winners at the end of the play".

Vigdis Ystad emphasises Thea's complexity of character. Thus, Ystad claims that "among Ibsen's minor women characters, she is probably the one most capable of rebelling"[29]. However, despite of her generosity, kindness and wish to help the love of her life, Thea's fault is that she has "no development of her own and no realization of her own personality". (Ystad, 1997: 57) Thea is a female character who sacrifices her life marrying the wrong man much older than her and having a relationship with another wrong man, her great love who does not love her and respect her as she does. Thea Elvsted devotes her affection not to her husband but to her lover, Ejlert Løvborg. Thus, her attitude is different from Agnes's, as she devotes all her efforts not to a strong man, but on the contrary, she is like a nurse focusing all her strength to a weak and vulnerable man. And, through her tenacious step she manages to make Løvborg concentrate upon his work and career. Unfortunately, her victory towards the vice will be temporary and relative.

In the end when she decides to help Tesman rewrite Løvborg's book and inspire Tesman as she inspired Løvborg, Thea seems to be more concerned about her work than about herself. In my opinion there is a slight possibility, although Henrik Ibsen does not suggest it that in the future after Hedda's death Tesman and Thea could become a couple, get married and be happy as their characters are alike. Both Thea and Tesman are polite, modest, mild and caring.

[29] Ystad, Vigdis. "Women's Utopia in Ibsen's Writings". *Proceedings: Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. International Seminar and Workshop. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997, p. 57

9. A Controversial Maternal Devotement Resulting from a Mistake in the Youth: Mrs. Helene Alving from ***Ghosts***

Ghosts (1881) appeared two years after *A Doll's House* and therefore, it was interpreted as a response to the criticism given to Nora's slamming of the door. I will analyse **Mrs. Helene Alving**, the protagonist of *Ghosts* as a devoted and caring mother who like most of Ibsen's heroes and heroines is finally punished for the mistakes made when she was young.

Helene Alving is a complex female character who is both emancipated and traditional at the same time. She is emancipated in the first act of the play when she admits to Pastor Manders that she feels more secure reading some books that Pastor Manders strongly disapproves and considers them radical. Mrs. Alving was also emancipated twenty-seven, twenty-eight years before, more precisely one year after she married when she left her husband, Chamberlain Alving and sought refuge in Pastor Mander's house. Rønning asserts that in *Ghosts* family is a place without love and love could only be found outside marriage. (Rønning, 2006: 287) Thus, Mrs. Alving confesses to Pastor Manders how unhappy she was in the first year after she married. The priest who made her return to her husband tells her that it was his duty as a priest to send her home.

Mrs. Alving: Have you forgotten how infinitely miserable I was in the first year?

Pastor Manders: It is only the spirit of rebellion that craves for happiness in this life. What right have we human beings to happiness? No, we have to do our duty! And your duty was to hold firmly to the man you had once chosen and to whom you were bound by a holy tie. [30]

Helene Alving's coming back to her husband at the request of the man she loved, Pastor Manders makes her be the opposite of Nora from *A Doll's House* who leaves her husband, Torvald Hemmer without coming back. As Vigdis Ystad remarks "both Nora

[30] Ibsen, Henrik. Ibsen, Henrik. *Four Plays: A Doll's House, The Wild Duck, Ghosts and The Master Builder.* Edited by William Archer. London: Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1941 p. 134

and Helene Alving rebel against "conditions in the society of their time". [31] She points out the main disadvantages women had in the Victorian period of the 19th century regarding education, the possibility of getting a job, the right to vote and the property legislation right. Thus, as Ystad claims "women had no right to attend schools or universities, they had no right to vote or to enter occupations of their own choice". (Ystad, 1997: 51) These problems that women encountered in the 19th century could be also seen in many plays by Ibsen where almost all the female characters were housewives who took care of the household and of their family. For example, Betty Bernick from *Pillars of Society*, Nora from *A Doll's House*, Helene Alving from *Ghosts*, Beate from *Rosmersholm*, Ellida, Bolette from *The Lady from the Sea*, Hedda Gabler, the protagonist of the play with the same name, Aline Solness from *The Master Builder*, Rita and Asta Allmers from *The Little Eyolf*, Gunhild and Ella from *John Gabriel Borkman* and Maja from *When We Dead Awaken* are all women who have no jobs and spend most of their time at home with their relatives.

At the same time, Ystad mentions another disadvantage woman had during that time namely that after marriage "the husband became the woman's guardian and spoke for her in all matters pertaining her role as a citizen". (Ystad, 1997: 51) After her husband's death, Helene's wish is that her twenty-six year old son, Oswald should inherit all the money from her, not from his father. In this way, she is also different from other women in Ibsen's plays and emancipated at the same time.

Mrs. Alving: "It was my purchase-money. I do not choose that the money should pass into Oswald's hands. My son shall have everything from me – everything". (Ibsen, 1941: 140)

On the other hand, as I said before Helene is traditional because she married Alving without loving him and listened to her mother and aunts' advice, although she was in love with another man, Pastor Manders. Manders reminds her of her past claiming:

Manders: Well then, with your nearest relatives –as your duty bade you – with your mother and both your aunts.

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[31] Ystad, Vidgis. "Women's Utopia in Ibsen's Writings". *Proceedings: Gender Issues in Ibsen's Plays*. Dhaka: Momin Offset Press, 1997, p. 51

Mrs. Alving: Yes, that's true. Those three cast up the account for me. Oh! It's marvellous how clearly they made out that it would be downright madness to refuse such an offer. If mother could only see me now, and know what all that grandeur has come to! (Ibsen, 1941: 145)

Beauvoir claims that women "tend to look for a husband who is above in her status or who she hopes will make her a quicker and a greater success than she could". (Beauvoir, 1953:421) Beauvoir's theory can also be applied to some of Ibsen's heroines such as Mrs. Alving, Thea Elvsted, Ellida and Bolette. All these four women married older and richer men without loving them and the consequence of this is "the feeling of boredom and disappointment" (Beauvoir, 1953:440) that they have after getting married. Helene's hasty marriage with the rich Alving made her betray her love for Pastor Manders which could have made her entirely happy. As one knows very well, protestant, orthodox and Greek-catholic priests are allowed to marry and therefore, Pastor Manders could have married Helene if she had waited for his proposal. However, Pastor Manders never reproaches Helene for having married Alving but still he says tells Helene that it feels very proud that he convinced Helene to return to her husband a year after her marriage. He only states that: "It was my greatest victory, Helen – the victory over myself". (Ibsen, 1941: 148)

The result of her betrayal was an unhappy marriage which Helene had to endure for sixteen – seventeen years without telling anybody the truth and the secrets of her conjugal life. Only ten years after her husband's death when she commemorates the Captain Alving Memorial Orphanage, she confesses to Pastor Manders how miserable she has been all those years.

Mrs. Alving: That has been my ceaseless struggle, day after day. After Oswald's birth, I thought Alving seemed to be a little better. But it didn't last long. And then, I had to struggle twice as hard, fighting for life and death, so that nobody should know what sort of a man my child's father was. (Ibsen, 1941: 137)

Helene relates the whole misfortune she had to endure first to Pastor Manders including the fact that her husband had some affairs with other women and finally with their servant, Johanna. The consequence of the relationship between Alving and their servant was a girl, Regine who was Mrs. Alving's servant. Mrs. Alving was terrified that her son

could see the problems between her and Alving, so she decided to send her son away, although she loved him very much. She was afraid her son could realise what kind of man his father was and justifies her choice to Pastor Manders relating:

Mrs. Alving: It was then I sent Oswald from home. He was in his seventh year, and was beginning to ask questions, as children do. That I could not bear. It seemed to me the child must be poisoned by merely breathing the air of this polluted home. That was why I sent him away. And now you can see, too, why he was never allowed to set foot inside his home so long as his father lived. (Ibsen, 1941:139)

Unfortunately, Helene Alving is punished twice for having married the wrong man. She does not suffer only as a wife but also a mother. As a wife, she had to take care of her husband and stand all his moods and improper behaviour especially when he got drunk.

Mrs. Alving: "I had borne a great deal in this house. To keep him at home in the evenings – and at night – I had to make myself his boon companion in his secret orgies up in his room. There I had to sit alone with him, and to clink glasses with him, and to listen to his ribald, silly talk. I have had to fight with him to get him dragged to bed"- (Ibsen, 1941:138)

Despite of her sufferings, Helene Alving admits that she was not a loving and caring wife to her husband, and her cold rejecting attitude resulted in Alving's ruin. Thus, she confesses her guilt to her son in the third act. "Your poor father found no outlet for the overpowering joy of life that was in him. And I brought no brightness into his home"… "I'm afraid I made home intolerable for your poor father, Oswald". (Ibsen, 1941:176)

Beauvoir clarifies the duties that a wife must do for the society and for her husband. Her first duty is to "provide the society with children", and the second one is that wife must "satisfy a male's sexual needs and take care of the household". (Beauvoir, 1953:416) If one takes into consideration Beauvoir's quotation this means that Mrs. Alving did not do her duty to her husband and therefore, he found his happiness with other women including their own servant, Johanna.

Mrs. Alving's terrible shock is that her beloved son, Oswald returns home and tells her that despite of the fact he did not lead a dissipated life, he became sick of a

disease that was inherited from his father. The disease that Oswald is talking is syphilis. Although Ibsen does not use this word, it is very easy to understand from the description given by Oswald's doctor from Paris that it is this venereal disease that Ibsen is referring to.

Oswald: "You have been worm-eaten from your birth. He used that very word – *vermoulu*" (…) "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children". (Ibsen, 1941: 159)

Oswald explains to his mother how dangerous his disease is that he is "incurably ruined for life" and that he would not be able to work again as a painter. Helene Alving's first reaction as a good mother is to encourage her son saying she does not believe he is so sick.

In *Ghosts* one could observe the double theme of love story that could never be fulfilled. First, there is the love story between Mrs. Alving and Pastor Manders which ends up due to Mrs. Alving's marriage and secondly, there is the love story between Oswald and Regine which must be ended by Mrs. Alving's revealing of the truth she has hidden for many years. The second theme of the double could be seen in Oswald's relation to Regine which reminds Mrs. Alving of her husband's affair with Regine's mother, Johanna. Mrs. Alving: "Ghosts! The couple from the conservatory – risen again"! (Ibsen, 1941: 141)

Even Pastor Manders sees the great resemblance between Oswald and his father which is strongly denied by Mrs. Alving who thinks that Oswald looks like her.

Manders: "When Oswald stood there, in the door way, with the pipe in his mouth, I could have sworn I saw his father, large as life".

Mrs. Alving: "Oh! Can it be so? Oswald takes after me". (Ibsen, 129)

The second resemblance is that just like his father Oswald smokes, and likes to enjoy life. Rekdal asserts the symbolism of the cigar as an object of enjoyment which could connect to the Chamberlain Alving and to a classical, erotic symbol, namely the phallus. (Rekdal, 1998: 126)

Advised by Pastor Manders not to be "such a coward" (Ibsen, 145) anymore, Mrs. Alving decides to tell both Oswald and Regina the painful truth about them, namely that they are half-brothers and have the same father especially after she realised her son was in love with Regina and considered her the joy of his life. However, Regine who thought

that she could have married Oswald decides to leave her sick brother and go back to her step-father and help him with a sailor's home, "Captain Alving's Home". Disappointed by the cruel secret revealed by Mrs. Alving, Regine is also thinking about herself, about enjoying life and at the same time she reproaches Oswald's mother that it would have suited her better to have been brought up as gentleman's daughter.

Regine: If I'd known that Oswald was ill, why – And now, too, that it can never come to anything serious between us – I really can't stop out here in the country and wear myself out nursing sick people (…) A poor girl must make the best of her young days, or she'll be left out in the cold before she knows where she is. And I, too, have the joy of life in me, Mrs. Alving. (Ibsen, 1941: 177)

Templeton affirms that Regina's choice represents the chase "after the remnants of the Alving heritage to begin a career inescapably linked to her father's disease". (Templeton, 1999: 160)

In the third act, Mrs. Alving is planning to win her son and to make him love her in the same way as Betty Bernick from *Pillars of Society* is thinking about winning her husband.

Mrs. Alving: "I could almost bless the illness that has driven you home to me. For I can see very plainly you are not mine; I have to win you". (Ibsen, 1941: 179) Later on, she feels horrified by the fact that her own son is mentally ill, never going to work again, totally helpless and depressed.

Oswald: "But this is unutterably loathsome! To become a little baby again! To have to be fed! To have to – Oh, it's not to be spoken of"!

Mrs. Alving: "The child has his mother to nurse him". (Ibsen, 1941: 181)

The ending of the play is very relevant, full of symbolism and poetry and it emphasises Ibsen's capacity to create a family drama as it is shown in the title: *Ghosts – A Family Drama in Three Acts*. At the end of the play Mrs. Helene Alving is doing her duty as a devoted and patient mother and nurses her son who reproaches her for the life she gave him affirming:

Oswald: "I never asked for life. And what sort of life you have given me? I won't have it. You shall take it back again". (Ibsen, 183)

In the last scene of the play her son is asking his mother to give him the sun. Rekdal asserts that the word sun is metaphor for morphine he takes and at the same time for the desires and joy of life Oswald has.

At the end of the play confronted with her son's incurable disease, Helene Alving is punished for the fact that she married Alving and did not listen to her heart to marry Pastor Alving, the man she was in love with.

10. A very Patient Wife: Aline Solness from ***The Master Builder***

In this chapter I will analyse the role of Mrs. **Aline Solness**, a devoted wife whose attitude is strongly marked by the idea of duty.

From the very beginning of the play until the end Aline Solness, Halvard Solness's wife has the same polite, patient, shy and modest attitude to her husband, guests or friends. One could notice Aline's humble attitude from the first line she has in play when she apologises to her husband for disturbing him saying: "(*with a glance at Kaia*) I am afraid I am disturbing you". (Ibsen, 1941: 311)

There is still a connection between Aline Solness's excessive politeness and shyness and her way of doing her duty. The word **duty** seems to be an obsession for Aline as she always uses this word in her short replies. But the first person who notices Aline's short sentences and her repetitive idea of duty is Hilda Wangel, Aline's rival and guest. Hilda Wangel feels offended and she is the one who tells, Halvard Solness, Aline's husband and the protagonist of the play that Aline's idea of duty sounds cold and sharp.

Hilda: (*making a motion to throw her arms round her neck*) Oh, you dear, sweet Mrs. Solness! You are really much too kind for me!

Mrs. Solness: (*deprecating, freeing herself*) "Oh, not at all. It's only my duty, so I am very glad to do it.

Hilda: She said she would go out and buy something for me, because it was her duty. Oh, I can't bear that ugly, word! (Ibsen, 1941: 343 - 344)

Later on, Solness explains his wife's exceeding shyness with strangers as a result of a double misfortune that happened in the past. Thus, one could remark in *The Master Builder* (1892) as in all the other plays by Ibsen, an unhappy event from the past that has consequences in the present. Solness is explaining to Hilda Wangel, the only character in Ibsen's plays that appears twice in both *The Lady from the Sea* and in *The Master Builder*, how the great misfortune that happened eleven or twelve years before affected Aline and him. The first misfortune one was the great fire that burnt down the house that Aline inherited from her mother. The second one even more painful than the first one was the death of Aline and Solnesss's twins soon after the house was burnt down. Solness narrates the events to Hilda and explains the irony of Aline's obsession and insistence on doing her duty which in a way led to the death of their sons. He affirms that:

Solness: The fright had shaken Aline terribly. The alarm – the escape – the break-neck hurry – and then the ice-cold night air – for they had to be carried out just as they lay – both she and the little ones (…) But Aline fell into a fever, and it affected her milk. She would insist on nursing them herself; because it was her duty, she said (…) That is how we lost them. (Ibsen, 1941: 349)

After that terrible double misfortune Aline could never recover and she became depressed, very shy and very nostalgic about the past. Mrs. Aline Solness's grief could be seen in the way she is dressed and in the way she looks. Thus, Ibsen portrays her as woman "dressed with good taste, wholly in black" who "looks thin and wasted with grief, but shows traces of bygone beauty". (Ibsen, 1941: 311) The event affected Solness as well but not so much as it affected his wife. In this way, he did not want to build churches or church-towers and started to build cosy, comfortable and "bright homes for human beings". (Ibsen, 1941: 350) Solness explains to Hilda poetically that his wife's vocation and talent was to build up "children's souls in perfect balance, and in noble and beautiful forms". (Ibsen, 1941: 352) Her talent was crushed and shattered after the twins' death.

Although Solness is encouraging his wife to forget the unhappy past by saying that things would become much easier when they move to the new house that Solness was building, Aline Solness has the same pessimistic opinion about the present and tells Solness that he cannot build a real home for her. She says: "You may build as much as

ever you like, Halvard – you can never build up again a real home for me"! (Ibsen, 1941: 339)

Aline Solness's pessimism, excessive politeness and lack of life and good mood made Halvard Solness tell Hilda that his wife is actually a dead woman. "And now she is dead – for my sake. And I am chained alive to a dead woman. (*In wild anguish*.) I – I, who cannot live without joy in life!" (Ibsen, 1941: 374)

Dissatisfied with Aline's sobriety and grief, Solness tried to live his life with certain joy and happiness which he sought in his relation to other women. The first woman he has a relation to is his employee, Miss **Kaia Fosli**, "a slightly built girl, a little over twenty, carefully dressed, and delicate looking". (Ibsen, 1941: 303) Solness's young bookkeeper, Kaia is the heroine who sacrifices herself for the sake of fidelity. Thus, she is extremely fond of her employer who despises her. Although she has been engaged to Ragnar Brovik, a young architect who is Solness's employee, Kaia is still attracted to Solness and cares about him a lot. She says: "I cared very much for Ragnar once – before I came here to you." (…) "Oh, you know very well there is only one person I care for now! One, and only one, in all the world! I shall never care for any one else". (Ibsen, 1941: 310-311)

Frode Helland claims that Kaia Fosli "plays the role of fiancée and coming daughter-in-law, while she is in fact in love or obsessed with Solness". [32] Solness, himself "plays the role of deceitful lovers as much as he plays the responsible boss". (Helland, 1994: 311) Solness courts Kaia by kissing her hair and impresses her by telling her how much he needs her every day. He affirms: "For I cannot get on without you, you see. I must have you with me every single day".

Kaia: (*in nervous exaltation*). "My God! My God"! (Ibsen, 1941: 311)

Helland describes the relation between Kaia and Solness and clarifies how the illusion of the play is seen by the reader. Thus, as Helland asserts the master builder "breaks the illusion of the play within the play" when he tells Kaia "straight in the face that it is Ragnar he wants to keep and not her". In this way, "the illusion of the play is broken for a second" and "the reader can imagine it is Kaia he wants to keep after all".

[32] Helland, Frode. "Play within the Play – Meta-drama and Modernity in *The Master Builder*". *Proceedings VII International Conference*, Grimstad, 1993. Oslo: Centre for Ibsen Studier, 1994, p. 311

(Helland, 1994: 315) However, Kaia first understands her boss's real intentions but she is too naïve to see the truth. She is convinced by Solness that it is her he wants to keep after all. Kaia's infatuation with Solness supported by his encouragements is actually Solness's attempt to keep Kaia's fiancé, Ragnar with him. So, by seducing Kaia and making her stay, Solness hopes to convince Ragnar to stay as well and help him in his work as a master builder. As Brian W. Downs asserts Kaia's relation with Solness "distresses his wife"[33]. Aline's reaction towards her husband's relation is nevertheless very tolerant as Mrs. Solness only tells her husband ironically that Kaia Fosli "must be quite an acquisition" (Ibsen, 1941: 314) to him. Later on, Mrs. Solness expresses her dislike about Miss Kaia Fosli saying that she has "deceitful eyes" (Ibsen, 1941: 365) and stressing the fact that Solness cannot find anyone else like her in an ironic way.

Mrs. Solness: "Heavens! What deceitful eyes she has"(…) "But how can you get without her - ? Oh well, no doubt you have someone else in reserve, Halvard". (Ibsen, 1941: 365)

This last sentence is meant to express Aline's discontent about her husband's relation to Kaia Fosli first and then with Hilda Wangel whom I will analyse in the following lines. Therefore, the next retort is Hilda's who is defending herself that she is not the person to stay at that desk. **Hilda Wangel** is Aline's rival and unexpected guest who is actually the opposite of Aline Solness. The character of Hilda Wangel was inspired from Ibsen's relations to three young women whom Ibsen met when he was in his later years. As Templeton states, these three women were Emilie Bardach, the "princess of the Gossensass summer" (Templeton, 1999: 258), Helene Raff, "Bardach's confidante" who later became a successful novelist and painter (Templeton, 1999: 247) and Hildur Andersen, "an accomplished pianist and the love of Ibsen's late years" (Templeton,1999: 259). All these three women inspired Ibsen and as Templeton asserts they "would have consented to have, a sexual relation with Ibsen" but it was Ibsen who refused them because he was deeply bound to his wife, Suzannah. (Templeton, 1999: 257) Ibsen's relationship with these three women is an example taken from the playwright's life which could be also seen in Solness's relations with Kaia and Hilda. As

[33] Downs, Brian W. *A Study of Six Plays by Ibsen*. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1950, p. 181

I said before, Hilda is the only character who appears in two plays. As one well knows, in *The Lady from the Sea*, Hilda does not consider Arnholm an attractive man, but still in *The Master Builder* she is an admirer of the aged Solness. Dissatisfied with her home from Lysanger and not interested in studies, Hilda decides to come to Solness and his wife in order to have her kingdom. She reminds the master builder that exactly ten years before when he built the tower of the old church in Lysanger, he promised her, who was at that time a child of twelve- thirteen, to come back to her and give her a kingdom.

As Rønning asserts Hilda is a complex character. Thus, on the one hand she is an independent modern young woman of twenty-two, twenty-three who flirts and plays with charm. And on the other hand, she is a childish girl. (Rønning, 2006: 265) Hilda stands in contrast with both Aline Solness and Kaia Fosli, who are very polite, mild and devoted. Templeton points out another difference between Aline Solness and Hilda Wangel, namely that "her growing physical health contrasts sharply with Aline's sickliness". (Templeton, 1999: 267) Hilda is very self-confidant, optimistic and has initiative and is endowed with the power to encourage and manipulate people. She is at the same time a very good listener who can make both Solness and his wife confide in her. This quality of Hilda could be seen especially in the dialogue between Aline Solness and Hilda from the third act in which Mrs. Solness talks about her past and her grief. Aline admits to Hilda how much she loves and admires her husband who "is so kind and gentle in reality". (Ibsen, 1941: 369) Then Aline speaks about the terrible misfortune that ended with her the fire and then more tragically with the death of their twins. As Templeton claims "Solness, obsessed with his own physical life, knows nothing of his wife's". (Templeton, 1999: 273) So the only person who could know the real truth about Aline is Hilda Wangel. This fact proves the lack of communication between the two Solness spouses, a theme that is also found between other spouses in Ibsen's dramas. It is really surprising to see that Aline does not mourn for the death of her twins but for the loss of her house. Thus, Aline considers the death of her twins "a dispensation from Providence". Aline also claims that "in such cases one can only bow in submission – yes, and be thankful, too". (Ibsen, 1941: 370) At the same time Aline has a strong trust in God and in this way she says:

Mrs. Solness: Oh, no, no, Miss Wangel – do not talk about to me more about the two little boys. We ought to feel nothing but joy in thinking of them; for they are so happy – so happy now. No, it is the small losses in life that cut one to the heart – the losses of all that other people look upon as almost nothing. (Ibsen, 1941: 371)

Later on, Mrs. Solness confesses to her young interlocutor that she was very much attached to her "nine lovely dolls" (Ibsen, 1941: 371) that burnt in the fire and that it was very hard for her to lose them all.

Mrs. Solness: "The dolls and I had gone on living together"… "But they were all burnt up, poor things. No one thought of saving them. Oh, it is so miserable to think of. You mustn't laugh at me, Miss Wangel". (Ibsen, 1941: 371)

From this quotation, one could see a similitude between Mrs. Aline Solness and Hilda Wangel, that is, their common attachment to their childhood. "Mother of dolls, not children", (Templeton, 1999: 273) Aline Solness put her soul in those nine dolls and she loves them like children stating: "I carried them under my heart – like little unborn children". (Ibsen, 1941: 372)

But despite of Mrs. Solness's confession to her guest, Hilda Wangel still remains Aline's rival. Therefore, in *The Master Builder* just like in *Catiline*, one can notice the same triangle of a man caught between two opposing women: one who is mild, weak, caring and protective, that is Mrs. Solness and the other that is strong, self-confidant and who is regarded as a femme fatale or a seductress is Hilda Wangel. There are also some differences between the two spouses Solness, not only between Aline and Hilda. Thus, Helge Rønning states that Solness is virile and robust, while his wife, Aline is incapable of life. (Rønning, 2006: 260) Another difference is the way the Solness spouses dream of. Thus, as Rønning says Aline dreams of the past, of the portraits on the walls and of her dolls while Solness dreams of the future and of building a new house for him and for his wife. (Rønning, 2006: 262) Nevertheless, as Rønning claims the master builder and his wife are both contrasts and parallels. In this way, his position is threatened by Ragnar while Aline's position is threatened by both Kaia and Hilda. Rønning explains Aline's grief and pessimism saying that Mrs. Solness did not accomplish her call as a mother, a very important role in marriage which is at the same time connected to her use of the word duty. (Rønning, 2006: 261) Rønning asserts that Aline lost both her function as

mother and wife as a sexual object. In the same way Aline Solness's attitude is not prominent and also not relevant. Her presence is useful for the psycho-social balance of her husband, Solness but her attitude is rather decorative as she does not succeed in stopping her husband have a relation with the young Hilda Wangel.

The ending of the play presents Aline Solness as the concerned wife who is still concerned with the same idea of duty. Unfortunately, her duty will be fatal for her husband as it was in the case of her twins when she insisted on nursing them although she had fever. This time Aline Solness has to do her duty to talk to some ladies who are her guests instead of waiting for her husband and convince him not to climb to the top of the house. She tells Dr. Herdal:

Mrs. Solness: I shall stay on here and wait for Halvard.

Dr. Herdal: But some ladies have just come to call on you –

Mrs. Solness: Good heavens, that too! And just at this moment! (…) Now that they are here, it is my duty to see them. (Ibsen, 1941: 382)

It is not Aline Solness's fault that the master builder decided to climb the top of his house knowing that he gets very dizzy at the height but I could say that there is the possibility that if Aline had waited for her husband and had not asked Hilda to receive him when he comes and had not gone inside the house to see her guest, maybe she could have convinced her husband not to go on the top of the house.

The only person who is responsible for Solness's death is Hilda Wangel because she is the one who convinces the master builder that he can do the impossible one more time. But nevertheless Aline is extremely tolerant to the young, selfish and playful Hilda who will lead Solness to his death. First Hilda asks Solness to build her a castle with a tremendously high tower and with a balcony at the very top where she could stand and look down on the other people. Later on, Hilda states that the builders are such stupid and coward people, referring thus, to the master builder. At the same time, Hilda reminds Solness that ten years before he dared to climb the high tower and convinces him to do the same thing again. Unfortunately the very ending of the play is tragic because the master builder falls off his own scaffold trying to show off before Hilda.

Rønning mentions Atle Kittang's opinion about the play namely that *The Master Builder* is a play about the ruin of the family. (Rønning, 2006: 260) Aline Solness's fate

is very touching and sad. In this way Aline should have been the happy wife and mother but she is tortured, childless and becomes a widow at the end of the play.

II. Problematic Heroines with a Surprising Evolution

1. 4800 Norwegian Kroner or the Substratum of a Doll-Wife's Revolt

The sum of four thousand eight hundred kroner is the correspondent of Othello's handkerchief, or of *The Glass of Water (Le verre d'eau)*, a historical comedy by Scribe with the same name or of the lost letter from the Romanian satirical comedy *A Lost Letter* by I.C. Caragiale. Thus, it represents the object meant to polarise the plot of the play. But in Ibsen's play, *A Doll's House* (1879) the respective detail is relevant not only from an architectural angle but also from that of the required typology of the main heroine. Without her secret debt and forgery, **Nora** would have remained a simple spoiled and superficial woman who would not deserve to be analysed in this thesis. Her brave and risky initiative gives her an unexpected seriousness and a typological profoundness. Without this test of the true characters and feelings, the play would be deprived of conflict, motivation and finally of an ending.

The dynamical movement is in this way concentrated in the route of the characters which evolve antithetically and surprisingly from appearance to essence. It is obvious that the mutation is a polyvalent one leading to an ending that is positive or negative, favourable or even catastrophic.

The evolution of the protagonist of the play, Nora is the most surprising. She remarks herself from the very beginning as a spoiled wife who is called by her husband: "lark", "squirrel", "song-bird" and so on. From the first scenes one knows that Nora likes to spend a lot of money and therefore, her husband, Torvald Helmer calls her his little spendthrift.

Her school friend, Christina Linden who visits her as a person who wants to ask her a favour, characterises Nora as "a shocking little spendthrift" (Ibsen,1941: 33) and "a child" who "knows so little about the troubles and burdens of life" (Ibsen, 1941: 36) Still Nora does not feel so offended by these qualifying adjectives. With ingénue sincerity, Nora reveals to her visitor her prosperous financial position and promises Christine to convince her husband, Torvald Helmer, the manager of the Joint Stock Bank to give her a position in the bank led by Helmer. At the same time Nora confesses a part of the truth about the debt Nora had in order to make a trip to Italy and recover Torvald's health.

Her generosity soon proves to be extremely imprudent because the lawyer Nils Krogstad, Nora's creditor for the sum of four thousand eight hundred kroner asks her to intercede for him so that Helmer should not dismiss him from the bank, an intention which was concomitant with Helmer's decision to replace Krogstad with Mrs. Linden.

From that moment Nora's situation was as complicated as it was in the past during her first year of marriage when she had to hide the debt she took from Krogstad from both her father and her husband, who were both sick. Nora's forgery of her father's signature is even more serious as it makes Krogstad blackmail her to use and he asks her influence to her husband so that he would not be dismissed from the bank unless he tells her Helmer the truth about her past. Being extremely worried about the confrontation with Helmer about her forgery, the emotive Nora desperately tries to find different solutions. She thoughts about appealing to Krogstad's generosity, or about Christine Linden's help to use her influence over Krogstad, or about leaving her house and even about suicide and finally she hopes that a miracle could save her. In addition to these solutions Nora is also excited about the adornment of the Christmas tree, an activity that was also emphasised in the late novel, *Marriage in Heaven* (1938) by the Romanian writer, Mircea Eliade where the effort to play with children coincides with the preparations for a masked ball.

Finally the confrontation between the two spouses takes place in a very unhappy moment when Torvald finds out about his wife's forgery; then his fury goes beyond Nora's expectations. Thus, Torlvald is not satisfied to call Nora "a hypocrite, a liar" and "a criminal" (Ibsen, 1941: 96) but he also tells her that her children could not be left with

her anymore and when Nora suggests the idea of suicide, he continues to be as furious as before.

Helmer: I don't want any melodramatic airs. (…)

Nora: When I'm out of the world you will be free.

Helmer: Oh, no fine phrases! (…) No good whatever! He can publish the story all the same; I might even be suspected of collision. People will think I was at the bottom of it all and egged on you. (Ibsen, 1941: 96-97)

One could notice that behind this excessive anger, Torvald's character is a disgraceful combination of paltry conformity and cowardice. The thought that his inviolable respectability would be affected made Helmer go beyond the limits of politeness and good manners.

Bernard Shaw's theatre uses the same satire of the bourgeois respectability imposed to an absurd manner. Helmer's fury proves to be improper as it is soon followed Krogstad's second letter in which he apologises for the first note. Not suspecting that he himself is to blame for his rude and improper behaviour, Helmer comforts Nora with a ridiculous assurance. "I know that what you did was all for love for me". (…) "I have forgiven you, Nora – I swear I have forgiven you". (Ibsen, 1941: 98-99)

Only the first sentence suggests a certain common sense. But Helmer should have said this sentence earlier instead of that outburst of anger and not with superiority in his voice. He specifies that his forgiveness makes him have the feeling of a double property of his wife.

Helmer: "There is something indescribably sweet and soothing to a man in having forgiven his wife – honestly forgiven her, from the bottom of his heart. She becomes his property in a double sense. She is as though born again; she has become, so to speak, at once his wife and his child". (Ibsen, 1941: 99)

One can easily notice that this confrontation between Nora and Helmer makes one think of Beauvior's study of the relationship between women and men. Thus, Beauvoir claims that Nora allowed her husband to decide for her finally she reproaches it to him:

Nora: "You arranged everything according to your taste; and I got the same tastes as you; or I pretended to – I don't know which – both ways, perhaps". (Ibsen, 1941: 101)

Disgusted, Nora decides to leave her husband and her three children: Ivar, Bob and Anna as she cannot "spend the night in a strange man's house". (Ibsen, 1941: 106) Motivated by the above-mentioned reasons, the heroine maintains her decision to leave despite of all the counter-arguments given by the disconcerted Helmer. Torvald tries to convince Nora not desert him giving her the counter-arguments of her conscience, morals, religion, public opinion, of her duties as wife and mother, even in the manner of sharp retort of a presumed delirium. As Sæther claims Nora dreamed about the "miracle of miracles" (Ibsen, 1941: 107) that a man and a woman would stand together and love each other "the moment the other needed help". (Sæther, 1997: 32) This idea is expressed in the final confrontation between the two spouses when Torvald tells Nora:

Torvald: "But no man sacrifices his honour, even for one he loves". (Ibsen, 1941: 105)

As Ystad asserts, Nora replies with her famous line: (Ystad, 1997: 55)

Nora: "Millions of women have done so". (Ibsen, 1941:105)

As Ystad states Nora's disappointment is explained by the fact that she was willing to sacrifice everything including her honour for her husband, while Helmer, "as a member of society, places honour higher than feelings for his wife". So this is how Nora's "world breaks down". (Ystad, 1997: 55)

In the name of this immense disappointment, of the refusal to accept her status as doll-child and doll-wife she first had in her father's house and in Helmer's house, Nora realises that she has been living a world of illusion and decides to leave Helmer's house with a small suitcase after she gives back her wedding ring.

Obviously, Nora's controversial gesture portrayed by Ibsen with the signification of a manifesto of feminine and feminist independence represents another hypostasis towards the absolute cultivated by the great playwright and thinker.

2. Christine Linden or the Potentiality of Devotion

If by her dramatic decision from the ending of *A Doll's House*, Nora refuses to be a child, a doll-wife and a clown, her friend and protégé, **Christine Linden** undergoes another type of change. It is worth remembering that her both anterior biography and her character are antithetically created to the one of the main heroine, Nora. In this way, Mrs. Linden can enjoy freedom and does not have to justify herself in front of anybody and can be proud of her past that she helped her bedridden and helpless mother and her two younger brothers who were very poor. Concerning this last issue, Christine Linden married a rich man whose business was uncertain without loving him in order support her family. Although, Mrs. Linden is Nora's guest and petitioner, she looks down upon Nora calling her child and telling her that she does not have a father to give her money. However, despite of these satisfactions, Mrs. Linden feels extremely lonely and empty as she does not have anyone to live for.

Nora: "How free your life must feel"!

Mrs. Linden: "No, Nora; only inexpressively empty. No one to live for". (Ibsen, 1941: 35)

Her unhappiness and stress also explains the fact that Christine looks much older than Nora at the beginning of the play. At the same time this vacuum is the one that makes Mrs. Linden, a widow whose husband died three years before leave her home and look for Nora, her old friend in order to ask her to give her a position in the bank led by Torvald Helmer, Nora's husband. Actually, beyond this reason, one can easily identify another reason for Christine's coming to Nora, namely her wish to find a husband or a lover. Therefore, Mrs. Linden meets by chance the lawyer, Nils Krogstad, her former lover whom she deserted in order to marry a richer man. The fact that Krogstad is a widower with children does not stop Mrs. Linden from wanting to be with him again. This attitude shows that Christine is not an ordinary parvenu interested in gaining more money but finally she has a capacity of love which reminds one of other representatives

of devotion and fidelity mentioned in the previous chapters. Her aspiration towards affection and devotement is pathetically in the conversation of her future husband, Krogstad. Thus, she tells him:

Mrs. Linden: "All my life, as long as I remember, I have worked; work has been my great joy. Now I stand quite alone in the world, aimless and forlorn. There is no happiness in working for one's self. Nils, give me somebody and something to work for". (Ibsen, 1941: 85)

The same idea she takes again in a final retort animated by an increased optimism.

Mrs. Linden: "What a change! What a change! To have somebody to work for, to live for; a home to make happy"! (...) I wish it would come". (Ibsen, 1941: 87)

It is obviously that through these accents, Ibsen takes again a typological recurrent motif in his plays. Thus, this episode marks a significant similitude which is inversed between the destinies of these two friends. The generous and hospitable Nora loses everything, breaking up with her agitated and contradictory past. On the contrary, the less predictable and apparently linear Christine Linden is finally rewarded (together with her former lover, Krogstad) with new surprises and promising chances. But both Christine and Nora are endowed with the same problematic physiognomy of heroines evolving to devotion or on the contrary, they discover their new vocation unexpectedly.

3. The Self-Sacrifice as a Supreme Expression of Attachment: Rebecca from ***Rosmersholm***

Rebecca West is a problematic heroine who develops her attitude during the play and who is capable of self-sacrifice. Her attitude is at the same time contradictory and typical for Ibsen's theatre of ideas. Her character and evolution are very much connected to Rosmer's evolution in the play. Rosmer and Rebecca's destinies do not represent the implicit character identity between the two of them. For example the difference between the classes is very obvious: Rosmer is the owner of the old domain of Rosmersholm

while Rebecca comes from a more modest family. Her behavioural antecedents are retrospectively related to those of another parvenu Rebecca Sharp, the protagonist of the novel *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray. Edmund Gosse asserts that there is a difference between the two Beckies namely that: "Rebecca West thirsts for power, for influence, for independence, and she is scarcely more scrupulous than Becky Sharp, but intellectually and spiritually she is a very much finer creature."[34]

Templeton explains that Ibsen's model for Rebecca was a "New Woman" named Countess Ebba Piper, "a liberal-minded member of Stockholm society who caused a scandal when she fled Sweden with the husband of one of her relatives". The man she eloped was the Swedish poet Carl Snoilsky "whom Ibsen met in 1864 when both of them were living in Rome." (Templeton, 1999: 181) As a new woman, Rebecca is portrayed by Sæther as "the modern woman, free, financially independent" (Sæther, 1997: 34) who is at the same time "attractive and erotically challenging"[35].

It is worth mentioning Sæther's comparison between Rebecca, Nora and Hedda, three women who "have been raised by their fathers" "according to male expectations" and who have "been placed in a male pattern role". (Sæther, 1997: 35)

Rebecca came to Rosmersholm at **Beate**'s request and later on she makes the poor Beate commit suicide reproaching her that she could not have children. Beate's desperate gesture was later explained by the fact that both Rosmer and the public opinion considered her insane. Rønning claims that Beate is presented as a madwoman driven by a frightening passion reminding in this way of "the madwoman in the attic" of the 19th century literature. (Rønning, 2006: 219) The truth is that Beate was rejected sexually by Rosmer who declared that he was terrified by Beate's "wild fits of passion". (Ibsen, 1913: 261) Since there was no sexual contact between them, there are no children. As Rønning says, Beate feels extremely guilty because of Rosmer's rejection which finally drives her into madness. (Rønning, 2006: 222)

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[34] Gosse, Edmund. "Ibsen's Social Dramas". *The Fortnightly Review*. Chapman & Hall, 1889, p. 119

[35] Sæther, Astrid. "The Female Guilt Complex – A Study of Rebekka West in Ibsen's Rosmersholm in the light of the recent feministic psychoanalytical theory". *Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen*. Vol. V. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1985, p. 39

Rebecca's malefic behaviour can be compared to Hedda Gabler's attitude up to a certain point. Her attitude was not determined by her love for children or by a spiritual marriage meant to generate calm, joy and the certainty of a good conscience as Rosmer thought, but it was determined by "a wild, uncontrollable passion" (Ibsen, 1913: 304). At the beginning of the play Rebecca was a strong character who wanted to free Rosmer from Beate and make him have a true life. As Kittang claimed during the course from February 23, 2006 Rebecca represents life while Beate represents death and it was a struggle for life against death between these two heroines who both loved Rosmer.

Rebecca's presence at Rosmersholm after Beate's death contributed to Rosmer's apostasy and change in political views. At the same time it is seen as something improper and criticised by Kroll who suggests a marriage between Rosmer and Rebecca. Rosmer is a man of principles who wants to marry Rebecca because he thinks that both of them believe in friendship, that a man and a woman can live together simply as friends. Rosmer: "I was thinking of what brought us together from the first, what links us so closely to one another – our common belief in the possibility of a man and woman living together in chastity." (Ibsen, 1913: 278)

As Kittang asserts the play is about the awakening and development of feelings of guilt, remorse and bad conscience.[36] The feeling of guilt is disclosed by Kroll's revelations in which he makes both Rosmer and Rebecca responsible for Beate's death. Kroll confesses to his brother-in-law that some days before Beate committed suicide, she had told him that: "I have not much time left; for John must marry Rebecca immediately now." (Ibsen, 1913: 263) This is Kroll's explanation for his sister's death: she wanted to die so that Rosmer could live as he pleased. But in my opinion it is also Kroll's blame as he did not mention Beate's despair to Rosmer and preferred to keep the secret until it was too late. However, Kroll does not have any feeling of guilt regarding his sister's death and it is Rosmer who feels the most guilty about for Beate's death. Rosmer confesses to Rebecca the feeling of guilt he has concerning Beate's death.

Rosmer: When I look back, it seems to me that I did everything I could to keep her apart from out lives. (…) To think that she was – with her affection all distorted by

[36] Kittang, Atle. "Some Observations on the Problem of Guilt in Rosmersholm". *Ibsen, Tragedy and the Tragic – Acta Ibseniana*. Oslo: University of Oslo, 2002, p. 110

illness –never saying a word – watching us – noticing everything and misconstruing everything. (…) What a fight she must have fought and fought alone, Rebecca! In despair, and all alone, Rebecca! (Ibsen, 1913: 275 –276)

It is also Rebecca's guilt for Beate's death described in her confession to Rosmer after Kroll's harsh explanation about her birth and his investigation about her past. Rebecca confesses to Rosmer and Kroll her guilt claiming that it is entirely her fault, not Rosmer's and that she is a different woman now who regrets what she did in the past. Rebecca tells Rosmer: "It was not you, John. You are innocent. It was I that lured – that ended by luring Beate into the tortuous path." (Ibsen, 1913: 296) "I thought that there were lives to choose between, John". "I am a different woman now, when I am telling you this, from what I was then." (Ibsen, 298)

Sæther explains Rebecca's guilt namely that she convinced Beate that "the meaning of marriage and woman's foremost goal in life" was "to bear a child". (Sæther, 1985: 42)

Robert F. Gross describes the persistent feeling of guilt that maintains continuity starting from Beate's death until the end of the play when Rosmer and Rebecca committed suicide.

"It is rather guilt that maintains continuity between the past and the present." (…) "It is a persistent sense of guilt linked to the memory of Beate that first manifests itself at the beginning of the play through Johannes's inability to cross the bridge from which Beate leapt to her death and leads finally to his own suicide on the same bridge at the play's conclusion."[37]

It is worth mentioning Sigmund Freud's interpretation of the play, which starts from Rebecca's refusal to marry Rosmer. Rebecca's refusal together with her confession of her guilt is extremely unexpected for a manipulator and parvenu like her and it is extremely hard to explain why she turned down Rosmer's proposal. Freud claims that Rebecca West refuses Rosmer's proposal because she feels extremely guilty about her past and about the fact that she had incestuous relations with Dr. West who according to Kroll's calculations was her biological father. Rebecca's first refusal in the second act

[37] Gross, Robert F. "The Maelstrom of the Modern". *Essays in Theatre*. Guelph Ont.: Hobart & William Smith, 1995, p. 161

takes place even before knowing her illegitimate origin and according to Freud, "Rebecca's feeling of guilt has its source in the reproach of incest, even before Kroll, with his analytical perspicacity, has made her conscious of it.[38]" Rebecca's refusal to marry Rosmer is according to Kittang "under the influence of a deeper guilt than the moral responsibility for Beate's death" (Kittang, 2002: 112).

When Kroll starts talking about Rebecca's past and about the contact between her mother and a distinct physician, Dr. West, Rebecca admits that she is a year older than she told everybody and explains why she lied about her age. Rebecca says: "When I had passed my twenty-fifth birthday, I thought that I was getting altogether too old for an unmarried girl, so I resolved to tell a lie and take a year off my age" (Ibsen, 1913: 292).

But still Kroll is more satisfied by this claim and says that Dr. West was in Finmark at that time. Kroll tells Rebecca: "But my calculations may be quite correct, all the same; because Dr. West was up in Finmark for a flying visit the year before he was appointed." (Ibsen, 292)

Rebecca's reply is the following: "(*walking about, wringing her hands*). It is impossible. It is only something you want me to believe it. It cannot be true. Nothing in the world -" (Ibsen, 1913: 292)

Her agitation and amazement is so extreme that is was interpreted as the realisation of the fact that she was her own father's mistress. Although Freud's interpretation was criticised, Kittang supports it by claiming that in the final draft Ibsen had in mind an incestuous relationship between Rebecca and Dr. West but in the final version of the play Ibsen decided not to show it so obvious to the readers. (Kittang, 2002: 112)

But still in my opinion it is rather surprising why Rebecca changed her surname from Gamvik to West without knowing that Dr. West was her biological father. Did she do it in order to make other people forget about her modest origin or to show her affection and respect for Dr. West?

According to Freud there is a strong connection between Rebecca's present and the past. He claims that "everything that happened to her at Rosmersholm, her falling in

[38] Freud, Sigmund. "Some Character Types met within Psycho-Analytic Work". *On the History of Psycho-Analytic Movement*. London: The Hogarth Press, 1916, p. 329

love with Rosmer and her hostility to his wife, was from the first a consequence of the Oedipus complex, an inevitable replica of her own relations with her mother and Dr. West" (Freud, 1916: 330). Moreover, Freud asserts that Rebecca represents the prototype of the servant, companion or governess who wants to take the mistress's place and marry the master of the house.

Janet Garton suggests another possible explanation for Rebecca's refusal. Thus, Garton asserts that Rosmer's proposal was totally inadequate and not based on love but on fear. Rosmer's proposal was: "Rebecca – suppose I asked you now – will you be my second wife?" "I cannot – I will not – go through life with a dead body on my back." (Ibsen, 1913: 278 –279) Garton claims that the proposal is tactless for two reasons. The first one is a man who was married before should not propose a woman by reminding her of his former wife. And second one is that Rosmer talks about his past, his first wife's death which means he is unable to offer her a marriage but "a struggle with ghost which will always cling to Rosmersholm."[39]

However, Toril Moi is not so satisfied with Freud's interpretation of Rebecca's no and she suggests another kind of interpretation of Rebecca's no. In her latest book *Ibsens modernisme*, Moi asserts that one must consider the fact that the first time Rebecca refused to marry Rosmer was before knowing she was Dr. West's own daughter. Moi also advises the reader to take Rebecca's explanations into consideration and seriously. As Moi claims Rebecca was free and ready to commit certain crimes in order achieve her goals when she came to Rosmersholm, but later on, life together with Rosmer changed her and took away her sexual desires. In spite of this, Rebecca's transformation destroyed the only thing she wanted in life: happiness.[40]

Haakonsen states that most of Ibsen's characters from his realistic plays hide their past by not telling relevant things about their past. "Their past have a turn, a connection with the plans they are striving to achieve. That is why they camouflage their thoughts, feelings,

[39] Garton, Janet. "The Middle Plays". *The Cambridge Companion to Ibsen*. Ed. by James McFarlane. Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 1994, p. 112

[40] Moi, Toril. *Ibsens modernisme*. Oslo: Pax Forlag A/S, 2006, p. 390

intentions, and aspirations.[41]" In Haakonson's opinion Rebecca West is a character who hides her past just like Nora, Hedda Gabler, Grengers Werle, Mrs Alving and Osvald.

The final scene in *Rosmersholm* is extremely interesting, ambiguous, complex and full of symbolism and therefore, it was interpreted and analysed in different ways. As Sæther affirms Rosmer's "proposal of marriage is the turning point in the play". (Sæther, 1997: 35) Thus, at the end of the play, Rebecca explains why she cannot marry Rosmer and her change in behaviour after coming to Rosmersholm. Rebecca says: "It was the Rosmer attitude towards life –our attitude towards life, at any rate – that has infected my will." (Ibsen, 1913: 306)

Finally Rosmer's depression, discouragement and disappointment led the discussion towards the dispute of existence or to a remedy of his interior breakdown. As Rosmer gives the impression that he lost his faith in everybody and in everything, and as Rebecca states that she is capable of making him trust her, Rosmer asks her to give him a proof of abnegation: that she should "go the same way – that Beate went." (Ibsen, 1913: 313) Rebecca accepts her supreme challenge renewing thus his faith in her. By redeeming her sin for having made Beate commit suicide, Rebecca wants to make Rosmer regain her confidence in her. Her heroic and memorable gesture of self-sacrifice is made in the name of love. At the end of the play, as Rosmer was asked to witness her self-sacrifice he is convinced that "man and wife should go together" (Ibsen, 1913: 315). Before they go the way Beate went, Rebecca is very curious to solve the dilemma: "Yes, but first tell me this – is it you that go with me, or I that go with you?" (Ibsen, 1913: 315) Rosmer's answer is both laconic and explicit, built on an apology of love: "We shall never get to the bottom of that". "We go with each other, Rebecca. I with you, and you with me". (315)

Sæther explains that Rebecca's attempts of emancipation are not successful due to her feeling of guilt concerning her past. (Sæther, 1985: 46) So that it why she does not want to marry Rosmer and sacrifices her life at the end of the play.

According to Kittang, Rebecca and Rosmer's **suicide** can be interpreted in a Christian way as a line of atonement that could be done through another sacrifice. The

[41] Haakonson, Daniel. "The Play–within the Play". In *Ibsen's Realistic Drama*. *Ibsen årbok*. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, 1970-1971, p. 130

end of the play was also interpreted as the illicit love between Rosmer and Rebecca that could be realised only through death. (Kittang, 2002: 110) Ystad specifies that suicide in Ibsen's plays is not used "as a reaction to disappointment" but it represents an act of sacrifice related to meaning and continuity". (Ystad, 268) Beauvoir shows that women when committing suicide "are more likely to drown themselves like Ophelia, attesting their affinity of woman with water, where, it is still darkness, it seems that life might find passive dissolution". This idea of committing suicide by throwing oneself into the water during night time can be applied to Rebecca's case who throws herself into the mill-race late together with Rosmer at night. Regarding the same topic of suicide, Nina S. Alnæs shows the pessimistic ending of the play saying that the couple decides to commit suicide just when the future is opened for them with all the possibilities[42].

Another possible interpretation of the final scene offered by Kittang is the idea that at the end of the play Rosmer has become strong and powerful and seduces Rebecca to go the same way as Beate while Rebecca ends up as a subordinate woman. The same idea regarding power is expressed by Rønning who explains that Rebecca has power over Rosmer but she does not have power over Rosmer's norms and urges because he feels guilty about his wife's death. (Rønning, 2006: 224)

Kittang also suggests a very interesting mythological interpretation in which he claims that Rosmer is the embodiment of a "nøkk", a mythological being usually represented by a white horse that seduces girls at midnight (Kittang, 2002:113). Moreover, Kittang asserts that "by identifying Rosmer with the *nøkk*, Ibsen turns *him* into a ghost. (Kittang, 2002:114)

Ystad explains that Rebecca decides to **sacrifice** her life for the beloved man "in order to save or to create his personality" because "the perfect realisation of their love can only be achieved through complete surrender: the sacrifice.[43]" Templeton writes that both Beate and Rebecca sacrificed their lives for Rosmer in the name of love, and thus, Rebecca took Beate's place and became a second dead wife. (Templeton, 1999: 184)

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[42] Alnæs, Nina S. *Varulv om natten*. Oslo: Gyldendal, 2003, p. 251

[43] Ystad, Vigdis. "Rosmersholm and Psychoanalysis". *Scand. Psychoanal. Review*. 1990, p. 136

As one can see, Rebecca's sinful and selfish behaviour is finally atoned by a proof of love. Although it has a self-destructive end, Rebecca's gesture makes her one of the most capable and devoted heroines who is consistent in her feelings.

According to Robert F. Gross, traditional gender roles are reversed, and *Rosmersholm* deals with two women who passionately in love with a passive man obsessed with the idea of chastity even after marriage. (Gross, 1995: 165) On the other hand, Rønning presents *Rosmersholm* as a three-act play about a weak man standing between a madwoman and an emancipated one.

Rosmersholm is one of the most pessimistic plays by Ibsen where all the attempts to create a happy and better life fail. This idea is emphasised by Sæther who claims that the play deals with "a woman's struggles for emancipation that destructive to others and to herself". (Sæther, 1985: 41)

I could say that the ending of the play is the opposite ending of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre* where the heroine Jane marries, an orphan like Rebecca marries the widower Edward Rochester.

4. The Rediscovery of Fidelity by through the Medium of the Free Arbitrator: Ellida from ***The Lady from the Sea***

The characters from *The Lady from the Sea* (1888) are contrasting and obviously, **Ellida** is the most complex and the most interesting character in the play. The conflict in which she is involved is an interior one and it opposes her to her past. Ellida is the second wife of a district physician Dr. Wangel and the step-mother of his two daughters: Bolette and Hilda. Ellida is also the daughter of a lighthouse keeper and she has a Viking name, the feminine version of Ellidi that is Fridjof the Bold's ship. (Templeton, 1999: 196) Despite of her passionate nature, Ellida chose a financial and social security by marrying Wangel without loving him. She was still thinking about her former fiancé or her spiritual husband, a mysterious Finish sailor called Friman or Alfred Johnston who had left her.

Before he left her, the Finish sailor or the stranger as he is called in the play had told Ellida that he had stabbed a captain and that he had to leave.

According to Erinç Özdemir, "the Stranger" represents "a projection of Ellida's *animus* or *shadow*[44]". Özdemir mentions Jung's definition of animus and anima as "archetypes of the inner personality as opposed to the outer personality, whose archetype is the persona". (Özdemir, 2002: 42) Furthermore, Özdemir argues that "in its negative aspect, the animus consists of qualities such as brutality" (Özdemir, 2002: 46) that could be also identified in the stranger's aggressive and destructive behaviour, namely that he stabbed his captain. Before he deserted her, the stranger also asked Ellida to wait for him and promised to come back. The stranger's symbolical gesture is extremely significant: he took one of his rings and one of Ellida's and said that they should be wedded to the sea. Ellida tells Wangel that: "He took a key-ring out of his pocket and drew off his finger a ring he used to wear. Then he took from me a little ring that I had, and these two he slipped together on the key-ring. And then he said that now we should together be wedded to the sea"[45].

Beauvoir asserts that women who are unhappy in their marriage and who feel misunderstood, bored or depressed will dream of another man who will come and rescue them. (Beauvoir, 1953: 526) Thus, this is also the case of Ellida who is very depressed and dreams about the stranger. She is at the same time extremely isolated, bored and lonely and cannot find her peace and happiness in Dr. Wangel's household. She suffered from a serious depression after the death of her son who died recently after his birth. Ellida's obsession with the stranger is reflected in her opinion about her son's eyes. Ellida says that "the child's eyes changed colour with the sea. If the fjord lay in a sunny calm, the eyes were calm and sunny. And the same way in storms". (Ibsen, 1919: 241) Ellida's inner crisis is increased as she somehow feels that her former lover is coming back. It is interesting to notice that this event makes her think about past, about the sea which in her opinion is connected to happiness. Ellida claims: "I believe that if men had only accustomed themselves from the first to live their life on the sea- or even in the sea-

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[44] Özdemir, Erinç. "A Jungian Reading of Ibsen's *The Lady from the Sea.*" *Ibsen Studies*. Vol. II. No. 2. Oslo: University of Oslo, 2002, p. 40

[45] Ibsen, Henrik. *Rosmersholm. The Lady from the Sea*. Introd. by William Archer. Vol. IX. London: William Heinemann. 1919, p. 232

we should by this time have been far more perfect than we are, both better and happier". (Ibsen, 1919: 254)

According to Özdemir, "the sea is an archetypal symbol of the unknown and the unconscious". (Özdemir, 2002: 43) Later on, the restless Ellida confesses to her husband that the temptation she has for the stranger makes her very much attracted to him on the one hand, but on the other hand, it arouses an overwhelming fear that is very much connected to nervosa. Ellida says: "Oh, there are times, you may be sure, when I feel as though there would be safety and peace in clinging to you, and in trying to defy all the powers that frighten and fascinate me. But I cannot do it"! (Ibsen, 1919: 319)

This feeling of agitation that Ellida has is explained by Beauvoir who states that woman without any profession "experiences more passionately, more movingly the reality in which she is submerged than does the individual absorbed in an ambition or a profession; she has the leisure and the inclination to abandon herself to her emotions, to study her sensations and unravel their meaning". (Beauvoir, 1953: 593) Beauvoir's idea can be applied to Ellida who is a restless housewife, to Hedda Gabler who feels very bored in the company of her husband and to Ella Rentheim who is obsessed with the fact that Borkman deserted her. These three women have no occupation or ambition and therefore, they have time to think about their problems, misfortunes and lives. And indeed the return of the mysterious lover makes Ellida extremely attracted to him and at the same time hypnotically terrified by the look in the stranger's eyes. Ellida tells the stranger: (Puts her hands before her eyes) "Do not look at me like that". (Ibsen, 1919: 261) As a matter of fact, the image of the eyes endowed with a supernatural power represents the main heroine's real obsession.

Ellida's depression and inner crisis is so serious that she cannot remember the way Dr. Wangel looks like when he is not near her. But on the contrary, concerning her formal lover, she remembered that he had a scarf-pin with a large bluish-white pearl. Ellida remember it with a very precise detail: "That pearl is like a dead fish's eyes. And it seems to glare at me". (Ibsen, 1919: 240) Ellida also has an uncanny idea that her dead child had the stranger's eyes and that Dr. Wangel was the embodiment of the stranger. The enigmatic stranger seems to be a very passionate and self-confident sailor who has come back to take Ellida with him on her own free will. Garton asserts that the stranger's

return represents a sort of anticlimax and that he is a merman, the sea itself. (Garton, 1994: 273) The stranger's return makes her meditate about her life, her marriage and she realises that that she is not happy with Dr. Wangel. Ellida affirms: "I see that the life we took lead with each other – is really no marriage at all". (Ibsen, 1919:302) Therefore, she feels the need to cancel the bargain, the marriage and be free to choose her life companion. Ellida asks her husband: "Give me back my full freedom". (…) "Yes, I choose I must – freely choose either course. I must be free to let him go alone –or to go with him". (Ibsen, 1919: 305) Dr. Wangel, Ellida's loving and caring husband was the one who contributed to the discovery of her revelation as he sacrificed his own will, determination, power and authority. Seeing that Ellida did not want to move to Skioldvik as he suggested, and that he could no longer cure her, Dr. Wangel decides to set her free realising that she belongs to the sea folk. On October, 5, 2005 at the conference about *The Lady from the Sea*, Jørgen Dines Johansen asserted that by sacrificing his own authority, Dr. Wangel wins Ellida. Wangel tells Ellida: "I cancel the bargain on the spot. –Now you can choose your own path in full freedom". (Ibsen, 1919: 343) Johansen also claimed that Dr. Wangel suspended the rule of reciprocity between spouses in order to win his wife.

Ellida can be regarded as the opposite of Solveig who waited for Peer Gynt all her life and dedicated her life to him and to religion. Thus, Ellida betrayed her spiritual marriage to the mysterious stranger when she married Dr. Wangel.

Concerning the ending of the play, Ellida's gesture is the opposite of Nora's final decision. Nora is another female character who is discontented with her marriage. While Nora decides to leave her husband and her children, being extremely disappointed about her husband's rigid and selfish behaviour, Ellida who had the freedom to choose due to Dr. Wangel's wise reaction decides to give up the sea and stay with her husband. At the end of the play, Ellida is no longer bound to her lover from the youth and she feels neither attraction nor fear for the foreigner. Ellida tells the stranger: "Your will have no longer a feather's weight with me. For me, you are a dead man, who has come home from the sea – and who is returning to it. But I am no longer in terror of you: you fascinate me no more". (Ibsen, 1919: 345)

It is surprising that abandoning both the youth nostalgia of all the possibilities and the temptation of leaving her husband, the lady from the sea finds her peace and comfort in the revelation of her responsibility together with her husband.

A Freudian interpretation of *The Lady from the Sea* was given by Garton as she considered it a study of Ellida's crisis and neurosis which is cured at the end of the play. Concerning Freudian interpretation, Dines-Johannes asserted that the stranger is identified with the sea, with the unknown, with the destructive passion and sexuality. Sandra E. Saari affirmed that "the Munich trilogy" consisting of *The Lady from the Sea*, *Hedda Gabler* and *Rosmersholm* deals with "vocation, the life's calling and with the concept of the "ideal woman"[46].

Ellida's change of behavoiur is unique and her final choice gives a happy ending for Ibsen's play of maturity.

5. From the Filial Devotion to the Discovery of a Wife's Vocation: Bolette

Bolette, Dr. Wangel's elder daughter is an intellectual girl who likes to read a lot and to take care of her father's household. Although, she is a very obedient daughter and a good sister to Hilda, Bolette is not contented with her isolated life in the carp-pond. Bolette has an aspiration which reminds us of Chekhov's works. Thus, she dreams of leaving home and of gaining some real insight into things in general. She is at the same time very frustrated with her life she has in the carp pond. Bolette says: "We cannot join in the stream. There is no midnight sun for us. Oh, no; we must be contented to linger our lives out, here in the carp-pond". (Ibsen, 1919: 248) (…) I daresay I was created to pass my life here in the carp-pond. (Ibsen, 1919: 252)

Another character that has an aspiration is the young Hans Lyngstand who is also dreaming about being a successful sculptor and about going to Rome in order to cure his

[46] Saari, E. Sandra. " 'Hun som ikke selv har noe riktig livskall...': Women and the Role of the 'Ideal Woman' ". *Contemporary Approaches to Ibsen.* Vol. V. Oslo: Universitets Forlaget, 1985, p. 24

disease, tuberculosis. The romantic and polite sculptor is also fascinated by the sea in the same way as Ellida's and he admits that he had to give up the sea due to his lesion. He has an optimistic vision of his future and also tells Bolette to dream about him while he is in Rome which makes the reader think that he might really be in love with her. Lyngstrand says: "It would be such a joy to me to know that you were at home thinking of me….Oh, some miracle or other might happen. A happy turn of fate – or something of that sort. For I am convinced that fortune is on my side". (Ibsen, 1919: 280) But later on, at the end of the fifth act, Hans Lyngstrand confesses to Hilda that he does not want to marry Bolette in the future because she would be too old for him. But the thought of Bolette thinking about him would be thrilling and help him in his career as a sculptor.

You see, marriage is out of the question for me for a few years yet; and then, when I have made my way, she will be a bit too old for me, I fancy. (…) For it would help me so much; as an artist, you understand. And she, having no special vocation of her own life, can so easily do it. (Ibsen, 1919: 335)

The discussion between Bolette and Lyngstrand concerning the ideal wife shows Lyngstrand's belief that the miracle of marriage consists of the wife's transformation so that she resembles her husband. But according to Lyngstrand the man cannot be changed so that he resembles his wife because man has a vocation, a calling for life. This idea shows the difference between man and woman in the European society of the 19th century where men had a career, an ambition while most of the women were only housewives.

Bolette is worried about her father and realises that her step-mother, Ellida is unable to support Dr. Wangel. That is why she dreads leaving her father. She is also encouraged by her former tutor, Arnholm to change her life entirely and to choose her destiny and future on her own. Arnholm tells her "It depends entirely upon yourself". (Ibsen, 1919: 252) Arnholm has an aspiration like all the other characters in the play. He is dreaming about marrying Bolette and he has the illusion that Dr. Wangel would have invited him as a suitor for Bolette. In the forth act in her discussion with the young Lyngstrand, Bolette admits that she cares about Arnholm and calls him such a good friend and adviser, always ready to help her whenever he can. But she specifies that girls would not marry their teachers. Bolette claims: "Oh, he has been the teacher of nearly every girl he knows". (…) "Why, of course, one doesn't marry a man who has been one's

teacher". (Ibsen, 1919: 283) Arnholm is a very persuasive and ambitious teacher who insists on marrying Bolette although he realises she does not love him. In order to make Bolette accept his proposal, Arnholm mentions the advantages and the possibilities of getting married; to see the world, to learn new things and to live in security and independence. In order to be more persuasive, Arnholm talks about a dark future when Dr. Wangel would no longer live and Bolette would be alone and she would have to marry another man she cares less than she cares for him. Arnholm warms Bolette: "And then – when your father is no longer with you – you might find yourself helpless and alone in the world. Or you might have to give yourself to another man – whom you- possibly – might not be able to care for, any more than for me". (Ibsen, 1919: 329) This is the final argument which makes Bolette think more thoroughly about her choice and accept his proposal. Even if Bolette initially refuses Arnholm's proposal saying that it is impossible to marry him, her former tutor, she finally accepts to marry Arnholm in order "to see the world – to learn something really worth knowing – to do everything that has seemed to me most delighted and impossible". (Ibsen, 1919: 323)

Beauvoir asserts that women tend to marry men who are "above her in status". (Beauvoir, 1953: 420) Beauvoir's theory can be applied to Bolette who accepts her teacher's proposal realising that she cannot get complete independence through her own efforts. According to Saari, Lyngstrand's opinion about women proves to be right. Thus, "Bolette is not an artist, she does not create her own design. She follows the already created pattern, even though her first impulse is to reject it as totally unacceptable." (Saari, 1985: 29) Templeton also gives an explanation for Bolette's choice. As Templeton asserts 'Bolette marries to educate herself'. (Templeton, 1999: 201) She continues by making a comparison between Bolette and Dina Dorf, a character in *The Pillars of Society*, and claims that they both want to leave their provincial town and the small community in which they live and educate themselves. The difference is that Dina Dorf travels to America together with Johan, the man she loves and become free and happy, while Bolette can see the world marrying a man she does not love. (Templeton, 1999: 202) In this way, Bolette's marriage is similar to Ellida's marriage because they both marry older men in order to have a better life, a better status. *The Lady from the Sea* can be regarded as a bourgeois drama which illustrates the inequality between the

spouses in the 19th century Norway, where women married for economical reasons while men were very much devoted to their wives.

Conclusions

The frequency of the devotion and sacrifice with specific features of Ibsen's female characters is a relevant attribute not only from one perspective. This typological preference could be identified with a moral attribute characteristic of a northern people, serious and trustworthy. Concerning the ethnical attributes, one could remark some respectable moral qualities of the Norwegian people such as the friendship towards Great Britain or the steadfast consistency towards NATO.

On the contrary, when it comes to the structure of plays, the frequency of characters endowed with these respectable qualities represent rather servitude or a disadvantage than a quality. This servitude consists of two hypostases: the servitude of marginalization and the servitude of depersonalisation. The fact that a character remains faithful to the cause of goodness and fidelity represents a drawback from the perspective of dynamism and dramatic energy. The cause of this drawback could be explained in the confrontation of the good and evil behaviour of people. Evil individuals in life, literature and theatre express their noxious feelings and inclinations in an active and resourceful way. These individuals are sometimes conspiring, greedy for power and wealth, vindictive and merciless as I showed in the initial **Argument**. The destructive tyrants and oppressors of humanity have always been more notorious than the generous and altruistic leaders. Nero, the base Caesar is more famous than the great emperor of Spanish origin, Traianus called "optimus" who was the father of the Romanian people. The cruel king, Henry VIII, the one who had six wives and murdered two of them: Anne Boleyn, the mother of Elizabeth I and Catherine Howard, is more well-known than the Dutch William III, Price of Orange was the first constitutional king of Great Britain from 1689 to 1702.

In the same way, discussing Ibsen's plays, the noxious Hedda Gabler, the protagonist of the play with the same name is as evil as Iago, a character from Othello by William Shakespeare. Is there any reason or advantage in her destructive actions? Unfortunately, there is no reasonable explanation in her malefic behaviour and therefore, her step seems to be inhuman and diabolical. The situation would have been different if Hedda, a married woman had decided to make Ejlert Løvborg break up with Thea and become her lover. Such an attempt without any scruples may still have some plausible human moral supports. But as one knows the slogan "art for the art's sake" supported in Romania by the critic and politician Titu Maiorescu, Hedda Gabler is practising in the same way the evil for evil's sake. For example, Hedda is not satisfied with making Løvborg start drinking again, but she also advises him to join the conspiring Brack to a party in order to see him "with vine leaves in his hair". (Ibsen, 1950: 325) And later, when Hedda meets Løvborg, she offers him a pistol from her collection telling him to use it beautifully. The obvious aesthetic expression of evil is Hedda's burning of Løvborg's manuscript. Hedda's suicide at the very end of the play that disconcerts the good-tempered Brack is a gesture that was also done beautifully.

1. The servitude of marginalisation

Concerning the development of plot and aberrant facts made in the name of the evil, some female characters unfortunately become devoted and generous. For example, Miss Julle Tesman who was intentionally offended by Hedda concerning her old hat not only that she forgives Hedda's rudeness but she also states her intention to help the pregnant Hedda as much as she can. Thea Elvsted, the other ingénue of the play is also irresponsible and naïve just like Aunt Julle. Although Thea knew Hedda's malefic behaviour from school, she still asks her colleague a favour, namely to recover the restless Løvborg, a decision which will be fatal for Løvborg. Having no reaction towards Hedda's conspiracy, it is not surprising that the plot develops without any contribution given by these good heroines. Thus, they are marginalised and at the same time the playwright does not give them the role of Desdemona, the role of the victim.

2. The servitude of depersonalisation

Analysing this repetition of the good behaviour and attitudes that result in marginalisation, one could notice the second feature: the inherent attenuation of the heroines' typological behaviour. This feature could be seen in Ibsen's early play, *The Pretenders* where all the female characters either wives, mothers or daughters show their devotion to the two men involved in the main conflict. The similitude of their attitudes marginalises them. The only heroine who is different from the others through the amplitude of self-sacrifice is Inga, Haakon's mother who does not dare to talk to her son and is satisfied with hiding herself under the eaves where her son, King Haakon was passing.

The same inherent attenuation of personality resulting from the weakening of the capacity to react and respond to dangers can be noticed in the behaviour of other heroines from the same category. For example, Aline Solness's example can be illustrative. Being used to have younger women near her husband, Aline is jealous on the inoffensive Kaia Fosli without feeling the danger of Hilda Wangel. She is not satisfied with her role of a very hospitable hostess but she also changes roles with Hilda and asks her to convince her husband give up his decision to climb the tower. Aline justifies her option by saying that it is her duty to go and talk to some ladies who paid a visit to her. This is a dramatic pretext used by Ibsen in order to remove from the scene the crucial moments. The result is the tragic death of Solness. Hilda Wangel who is metaphorically considered a bird of prey by Solness not only that she does not accomplish her mission given by the naïve Aline Solness but she also asks Solness to risk his life and climb the tower of his new house knowing that he was very much afraid of height. The weakening of the capacity to defend her family exteriorised by this representative of loyalty and devotion is again convincing. The consequence of this servitude consists of the heroine's marginalisation and depersonalisation. This observation could be also applied in the case of Kaia Fosli, the young woman in love with Solness and in the case of Marta Bernick from *Pillars of Society*. Thus, one could understand why the dramatic instinct determined Ibsen give up this linearity of his favourite female characters and decide to involve them in a dramatic conflict with the price of a change in the heroine's behaviour that sometimes was even a conversion. In this way one could remark:

3. The awakening of the problematic heroines

A very significant example is given by Betty Bernick from *Pillars of Society*. She seems to be another Aline Solness who enjoys her marriage and who is a marginal spectator of the conflict. But the discovery of the great threat that concerns Olaf, her son determines this doll to act quickly and contribute to his salvation. The disappointing discovery of her husband's lack of love will be focused by Betty on her vocation as a mother who fights as a real lioness to save her son. In this case, as one could notice the healing of weak instinct together with the gaining of the necessary vigilance of a mother the moment she sees a supreme danger.

Other female characters take a step forward, which means that they undergo a conversion or a change in their devotion.

The first hypostasis is the renouncement of the attitude that was considered to be valid. It is thus the controversial case of the radicalism of Nora Helmer. Profoundly hurt by her husband because of a risky gesture once made by her, Nora decides to leave everything – her husband, children and house in a winter night in order to educate herself as she says. Her act punishes her unworthy husband in a desperate way that resembles the majority of suicide gestures from the end of the plays.

The other representatives of this category are situated far from Nora's emblematic radicalism and sometimes it is rather difficult to claim that they are problematic heroines. For example, Bolette, Dr. Wangel's elder daughter from his first marriage was determined to sacrifice her future matrimonial plans and stay with her father. Finally she accepts Arnholm's proposal despite of the fact that he was her former teacher and older than her. Remembering that she also has the right to enjoy life, Bolette accepts Arnholm's proposal followed by his offer to show her the world and to assure her independence and future. There is no rupture between Bolette's past and future as in the case of Betty Bernick's maturity. In both cases one could notice a discovery of a new perspective towards life.

A resembling instructive experience is exemplified in Christine Linden's case. Her past was under the influence of sacrifice made for the benefit of her helpless mother and her two younger brothers. But as the motive of her self-sacrifice disappeared as her mother died and her brothers grew up, Christine is looking forward to starting a new life,

this time a happy and joyful one devoting herself to her former lover, the lawyer Krogstad. Her evolution completes the double symmetrical evolution in an opposite direction of the two types of characters. The initial representatives of stability and prosperity: Nora, Helmer and doctor Rank lose everything or almost everything: the first two lose their happy married life while the last one loses his life. On the contrary, the solicitors: Christine Linden and Nils Krogstad are finally rewarded with unexpected presents.

Rebecca West from *Rosmersholm* and Ellida from *The Lady from the Sea* are problematic heroines characteristic of Ibsen's theatre of ideas. These two female characters illustrate the typical aspirations of the dramatic universe towards the quasi-expressionist generalisation of ideas and experiences as well as towards the shocking endings of the plays. For example, Rebecca, after she made Beate commit suicide, refuses to marry Rosmer, a decision which is totally unexpected. But her final initiative to sacrifice her life as a supreme proof of her devotion and love for Rosmer, a former priest is even more surprising. The exaltation of Rebecca's gesture reminding one of Hilda Wangel, the woman who led to Harvard Solness's fatal fall, leads to a communion of devotion that ends up in a double act of suicide, as she is followed by Rosmer in the mill-race.

Ellida's change in behaviour at the end of the play is nevertheless less destructive and totally opposed to Rebecca's final decision. In *The Lady from the Sea*, one could notice the feminine behaviour reminding one of Emma Bovary of a wife dissatisfied with her life because she married Doctor Wangel, her present husband. Ellida's inner crisis together with the loss of her new born son is increased by the appearance of her former lover, a mysterious sailor. Endowed with hypnotic eyes that provoke Ellida an irrational fear, the mysterious sailor called the stranger represents the calling of the sea and the aspiration to the unknown, reasonable feelings for this lady of the sea. And Ellida's break with the stranger seems to be more imminent as Doctor Wangel shows compassion to his restless wife. However, unlike the dramatic ending from *The Master Builder*, Doctor Wangel's kind attitude seems to save Ellida from becoming another Nora or maybe another Emma Bovary or Anna Karenina. The heroine's choice takes place the moment she is confronted with her former lover. Contradicting the Freudian reasons from the 20th

century, Ellida realises that she does not dream about the unknown but about the freedom of choice. The play deals with the regaining of the right to live one's life without being influenced by determinations or parasitical interests. Doctor Wangel's wise and cautious restraint during Ellida's crisis is an antithetical attitude in comparison with Torvald Helmer's authority towards Nora, which results in the possibility to dissociate the reality to the illusion. In this way, Ellida regains a prerogative of the youth, namely that of choosing freely between at least two options. This event coincides with the regain of her position as a wife who is set free from the dissatisfaction and regret of a wrong choice. As one can see, the conclusion of the play reminds one the final sentence from *Pillars of Society*. "Truth and the Spirit of Freedom – they are the *real* Pillars of Society". (Ibsen, 1961: 102) One could specify that the two concepts do not suggest a feminine destiny but national and social meanings. As in the case of Christine Linden, Ellida's attachment and devotion to her husband and family represents a coup de theatre, a surprising solution for the conflict. The last message clarifies in a happy way the fidelity of this great playwright towards the Norwegian everlasting ideals valuable from a social, national and individual point of view.

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